

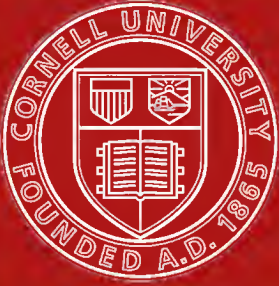
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The University Press Shakespeare

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
IN FORTY VOLUMES

Editor's Autograph Edition

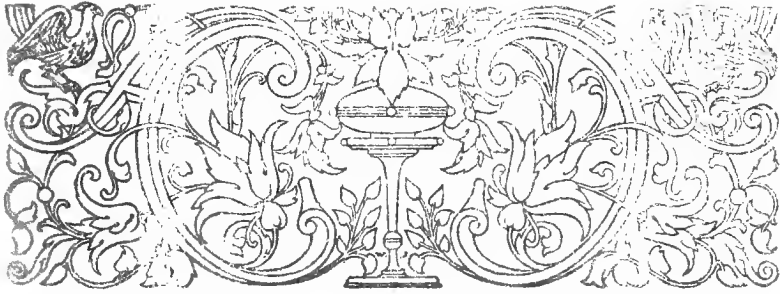
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THE COMPLETE WORKS OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

WITH ANNOTATIONS AND
A GENERAL INTRODUCTION
BY SIDNEY LEE

VOL. KING LEAR IV

SOLOMON J. SOLOMON

KING LEAR

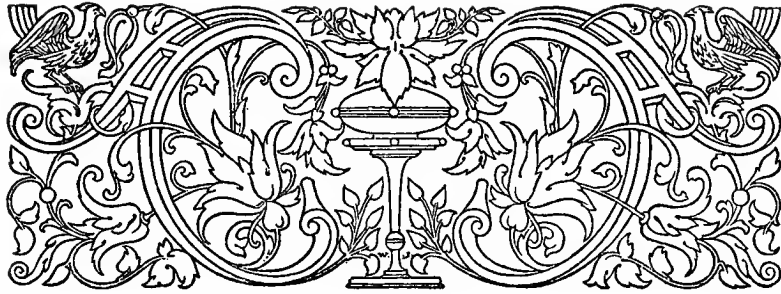
WITH A SPECIAL INTRODUCTION BY WILLIAM ARCHER
AND AN ORIGINAL FRONTISPIECE BY SOLOMON J. SOLOMON



NEW YORK GEORGE D. SPROUL MCMVIII

LEAR. "Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little. Ha!
What is't thou say'st?"

ACT V, SCENE III, line 271



THE COMPLETE WORKS OF
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A GENERAL INTRODUCTION
BY SIDNEY LEE

VOLUME XXXIV

KING LEAR

WITH A SPECIAL INTRODUCTION BY WILLIAM ARCHER
AND AN ORIGINAL FRONTISPIECE BY SOLOMON J. SOLOMON



NEW YORK GEORGE D. SPROUL MCMVIII

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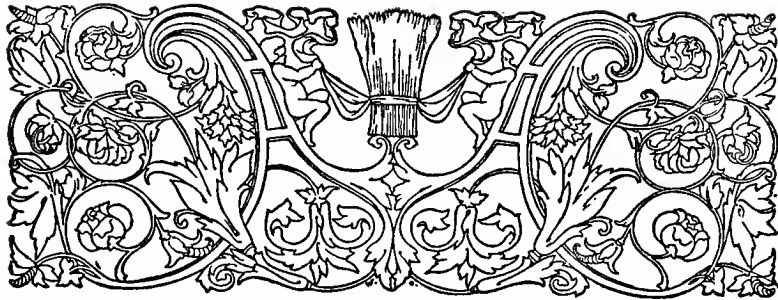
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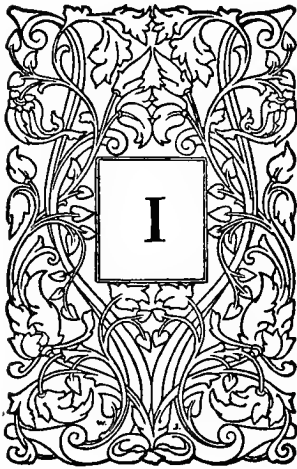
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INTRODUCTION



IT has been said — and I think the position a tenable one — that Shakespeare's supremacy is nowhere more manifest than in the instinct which guided the selection of his themes. The materials on which he drew were open to all the busy band of his contemporary playwrights; but it was he, and no other, who laid hands upon the great type-tragedies in "Romeo and Juliet," "Hamlet," "Othello," "Macbeth," "King Lear." It is not merely in workmanship, but in the universal significance of their subject-matter, that these consummate embodiments of love, pessimism, jealousy, ambition, and ingratitude overtop all other works of their time. As we review the tragic themes treated by

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the lesser Elizabethans, does it ever occur to us to say of this one that Shakespeare ought to have preferred it to the myth of "Romeo and Juliet," of that other that he would have found it more inspiring than the story of "Macbeth," or of a third that he might have made of it something sublimer, more elemental, than "King Lear"? In no single instance, I venture to say, does such a thought suggest itself. Goethe, indeed, has shown that there were great possibilities in the theme of Marlowe's "Dr. Faustus"; but even in this case, though it is curious to speculate how Shakespeare might have dealt with the legend, we should be sorry, I believe, to exchange, say, "Hamlet" for the greatest "Faust" imaginable. For the rest, who ever thought of lamenting that Shakespeare had not chosen the subject of "Volpone" or of "The Duchess of Malfy," or of "The Changeling," or of "The Broken Heart," or of "The Maid's Tragedy," or of "A Woman Killed with Kindness," in lieu of any one of his great tragic themes? All these stories, and such as these, whatever their individual interest, are inferior in point of universal significance to those which Shakespeare has made his own. They rank at best with Shakespeare's second-rate subjects — the themes, for instance, of "Measure for Measure," "All's Well," or "Cymbeline" — while the first-rate subjects tower above them in virtue of an inherent greatness which Shakespeare alone perceived. The fact that some of these stories had already been treated by nameless playwrights in lost or forgotten plays does not in the least conflict with this view. It matters not a jot whether Shakespeare found his material

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in narrative or in dramatic form. The point is that he first perceived and brought to light the typical quality of these themes, and that no one else in his time, and only the very greatest in any other time, can be shown to have possessed a similar instinct for going straight to the heart of things, not only in the treatment, but in the selection, of their material. A further illustration of this gift may be found in his Roman tragedies. While Ben Jonson was content with elaborately reconstructing the melodramatic episodes of "Catiline" and "Sejanus," Shakespeare claimed as his own the world-historic crises associated with the names of "Julius Cæsar" and "Antony and Cleopatra." One could almost imagine that the other playwrights purposely stood aside, and left him the great themes in right of undisputed sovereignty.

Is it wholly fanciful to conjecture a certain significance in the fact that, apart from the Roman trio, Shakespeare's great tragedies number just as many as the acts into which, accepting the classical tradition, he invariably divided his plays? At any rate, whether the number means anything or nothing, it is certain that this series of five plays presents an epitome of human life almost as systematic as that which Jaques outlines in the "Seven Ages." In "Romeo and Juliet" we have the budding instinct of love, in its first pathetic freshness, rushing to destruction through its own impetuosity. "Hamlet" shows the depression and disillusionment which so often beset a youth of delicate susceptibilities, on his first rude contact with a world full of cruelty, lust, and hypocrisy. In "Othello" we find maturity mated with youth, and tor-

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tured to death by the subtly-injected poison of jealousy. "Macbeth" shows us another of the calamities incident to ripe manhood—ambition, the morbid craving for power, fomented, as it normally would be, by that conjugal egoism which is all the fiercer for wearing a mask of self-devotion. And — "last scene of all that ends this strange eventful history" — "King Lear" presents to us the sombre tragedy of old age, deposition, supersession, neglect, filial ingratitude. Is not this a veritable encyclopædia of human experience, in its darker and more ominous phases? And is there any other Elizabethan tragedy which (even were its workmanship Shakespearian) could possibly claim admission to the series in virtue of the typical universality of its subject-matter?¹ All the leading figures of these plays have become terms of constant employment in the symbol-speech of the whole world.

We may regard "King Lear," then, as the last of a great cycle of tragedies. Let us note, too, that in all probability it was the latest in date of composition. This is not the place for complex chronological arguments: I am content to accept Mr. Sidney Lee's arrangement of the plays, which runs as follows: "Romeo and Juliet," early in the fifteen-nineties; "Hamlet," 1602; "Othello," 1604; "Macbeth," 1605; "King Lear," 1606. We know for certain that the tragedy of adolescence was by a long way the first of the series, and that the tragedy of early manhood came second; while the best evidence goes to

¹ If there be one, it is "Antony and Cleopatra," the counterpart to "Romeo and Juliet," contrasting with the passion of youth, the infatuation of middle age.

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show that the two tragedies of maturity stood third and fourth, and the tragedy of old age fifth and last. Can we regard this ordering of the mighty pageant as a mere chance? Does it not raise a presumption that the poet, who had mapped out the normal career of man, from a humouristic point of view, in the "Seven Ages," consciously devoted himself to the sequent composition of a cycle of type tragedies, or, as Balzac might have phrased it, a "Tragédie Humaine"? I do not suggest, of course, that he had this idea in mind from the moment he sat down to write "Romeo and Juliet"; but it may very well have arisen in his consciousness during the years when he was brooding over "Hamlet."

Even if this supposition be rejected as fanciful, the fact remains that "King Lear" is pre-eminently the tragedy of old age. There is only one other play in which the pathos of old age is treated with any approach to the like sublimity, and that is, of course, the "Œdipus Coloneus" of Sophocles. But how far less typical is the situation of Œdipus! His wretchedness arises, not from misfortunes to which old age is in the nature of things exposed — doting fondness, doting irascibility, the devouring egoism of the younger generation — but from strange and monstrous happenings in the past, which are so far from being generally characteristic of the human lot that they are conceivable only as the outcome of special malice on the part of the gods. We have none of us known an Œdipus, we have all of us, probably, seen re-enacted some part of the tragedy of Lear. The Père Goriot of Balzac is a Lear, not an Œdipus. It was to Shakespeare, not to

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Sophocles, that Turgenieff went for the key-note of his "King Lear of the Steppes." Looking at a deserted fortress lingering on in superfluous decrepitude, Henrik Ibsen wrote,

"I seem to see, as I gaze on thee,
King Lear on the storm-swept moorland."

Lear is the supreme symbol of a fate which does not — thank heaven! — overtake every one, but which may befall any one who survives his direct usefulness to the younger generation. He is the victim of an innate tendency in human — nay, in animal — nature, undisguised in the savage, more or less imperfectly corrected or dissembled in the civilised man. The fate of *Œdipus*, on the other hand, is unique. Its horror lies in its almost unthinkable remoteness from natural probability. I am not belittling the one play to magnify the other; I am not comparing them in respect of their whole poetic content. I am merely pointing out that King Lear is — what *Œdipus* is not — an example of one of the typical incidents of human destiny. He is the embodiment for all time of the tragic aspect of old age.

In this fact, rather than in any personal mood of the poet, I think we must look for the explanation of the chill and murky atmosphere, the desolate environment, in which the action is placed. That Shakespeare, as he grew older, saw more and more deeply into the tragic side of existence, is not only probable, but certain. At twenty-eight, his imagination, stimulated by experience, was adequate to the creation of "Romeo and Juliet"; it

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needed the accumulated observation and experience of fourteen more years to enable him to grapple with such a subject as that of "King Lear." But it is wholly unnecessary to conceive that any special mood of misanthropy, any personal disgust with life or alienation from his kind, inspired this or his other great tragedies. If there is any evidence of his having passed through such a mood, we must seek it in "Troilus and Cressida" and, more doubtfully, in "Timon of Athens"—certainly not in the play which is irradiated by the figure of Cordelia, and contains such an embodiment of steadfast nobility as Edgar, of loyal manhood as Kent, of tender faithfulness as the Fool. The atmosphere was prescribed by the subject. I do not mean merely that history—or what Shakespeare accepted as history—placed the saga of King Lear in a remote and barbarous antiquity. It is doubtful how far Shakespeare recognised this fact. He does not seem to have thought of Cornwall, Albany, Gloucester, or Kent as more distinctively barbarians than the barons in "King John," or even in later histories. Though the prevalent religion is paganism, the civilisation represented is simply that of feudal times, as it was conventionally understood on the Elizabethan stage. The gloom which hangs in the air of the play is begotten of the subject, not in its historical aspect, but in its essence as a phase of human destiny. What skies can be sad enough for the tragedy of old age,—what environment too sombre, what accessories too cruel? In all other dramas, however disastrous their issue, the protagonists have at any rate vigour, vitality,

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passion to sustain them. They grapple with their foes, they affront their destiny, on equal terms. They can, with Romeo, rejoice of their own free will to

“ Shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
From this world-wearied flesh ;”

or they can cry, with Macbeth,

“ Blow, wind ! come, wrack !
At least we ’ll die with harness on our back !”

But the tragedy of old age is rooted in decay, and can take no other form than that of monstrous cruelty. The decline of life, the waning of physical and mental power, the gradual encroachments of helplessness, are sufficiently melancholy of themselves, even with the alleviations of “honour, love, obedience, troops of friends.” But when these alleviations are denied — when insult takes the place of honour, and callousness of love — earth has no sadder spectacle to show. It was the poet’s task to present this spectacle in its typical deformity, and he naturally created an environment in hideous harmony with the main theme. Hence the machinations of Edmund, the blinding of Gloucester, the savage rivalry of Goneril and Regan, the subordinate villainies of the Steward and the Captain. They keep the picture in tone. A world of ingratitude, cruelty, and crime was indispensable to the main purpose of giving its utmost poignancy to the pathos of old age. Theme for theme, the physical and moral climate of “King Lear” is as inevitable as the physical and moral climate of “Romeo and Juliet.”

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It must be considered, moreover, that to have made the hypocrisy and leagued ingratitude of Goneril and Regan a single blot upon an otherwise sunlit and kindly world would have been to divest it of typical quality and make of it one of those criminal aberrations that now and then startle the most civilised communities, and seem causeless as bolts from the blue. That was not Shakespeare's design. A chance enormity did not interest him. Such things he left to Webster and the melodramatists. It was the universal for which he cared. He wanted to show the fate of Lear as exceptional in degree, no doubt, but not in kind. The phenomenon with which he dealt — or rather the two complementary phenomena, the superfluosity of age and the egoism of youth — belonged to the very constitution of things, the primal mechanism of Nature. The letter which Edmund forges in Edgar's name succinctly sets forth the motive of the whole action: "This policy and reverence of age makes the world bitter to the best of our times; keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish them. I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny, who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffered." Regan, Goneril, and Edmund represent in its crudest form the principle of the survival of the fittest: Cordelia and Edgar show that the entrance of moral ideas into the world has once for all modified the definition of true "fitness." When Edmund says, "Thou, Nature, art my goddess," he talks the language of misapplied Darwinism — of the evolutionism which fails to perceive that the purpose of Nature, the quantity and in-

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tensity of life towards which she is for ever striving, is better served by sympathy and humanity than by the relentless, untempered struggle for life which prevails in the Indian jungle or the African swamp. His goddess is "Nature, red in tooth and claw"; and it is the purpose of the play — or rather its effect, for Shakespeare knew these things by instinct, not by theory — to show that this is a self-defeating, self-devouring Nature, from which, somehow or other, a higher Nature has evolved itself. The same unbridled egoism which sends Lear out into the storm and betrays Gloucester to the brutal Cornwall, brings Goneril, Regan, and Edmund unfruitful and unpitied to their graves. But this principle could not be illustrated in a single example. It was necessary to show the higher instincts — the instincts of sympathy, gratitude, humanity, — outraged on every hand, in order to show how the insurgence of the lower instincts made, not for life, but for death, and so baulked the purpose of Nature. Thus the tragedy of old age became at the same time the picture of a recrudescence of animal egoism. Such a picture could not be exhilarating; but to find in it an expression of personal pessimism is to ignore at once the conditions and the issue of the case. To show humanity reacting at every point against cruelty — not only in Cordelia and Edgar, but in Kent, Albany, and Cornwall's servant — and to show cruelty barren, devastating, and feeding on itself, is surely not to express despair of the nature and destiny of man.

"But," it may be objected, "though inhumanity perishes, it perishes triumphant. The death of Goneril,

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Regan, and Edmund is balanced by the death of Lear, Cordelia, and Gloucester." Yes, because Shakespeare's philosophy was as remote from superficial optimism as from cankered pessimism. The death of Lear was a poetical necessity. What other end is possible to the tragedy of old age? To leave him alive — as Nahum Tate did, in the acting version which held the stage for a century and a half — was entirely to deprive the play of its typical quality. It was, moreover, to belittle all that had gone before; as Lamb saw when he wrote: —

“A happy ending! as if the living martyrdom that Lear had gone through — the flaying of his feelings alive, did not make a fair dismissal from the stage of life the only decorous thing for him. . . . As if the childish pleasure of getting his gilt robes and sceptre again could tempt him to act over again his misused station — as if at his years, and with his experience, anything was left but to die.”

If it be pessimism to own that old age must end in death, and that there are some calamities which human nature cannot — which it is well that it should not — survive, then, but not otherwise, is “King Lear” a pessimistic play. The same reasoning applies to the death of Gloucester, but not to the killing of Cordelia. For that, it seems to me, there is no philosophic necessity. The play, as a symbol, could not be called incomplete without it. Why, then, is she doomed to die? For a purely dramatic reason, I take it — namely that Lear's death, without hers, would be at once less affecting and less obviously necessary. The poet wanted to give Lear a great “pathos scene” — in the antique sense of the term — and at the same time to break the last tie that attached

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him to life. Though not inevitable, then, the death of Cordelia is by no means arbitrary or dragged-in. It may rather be called one of the probable incidents of the theme. How often do we see the Lears of the real world in child-like dependence on a Cordelia! And how often is the extinction of the young life the signal for the flickering-out of the old! Here again, as compared with the "Ædipus Coloneus," "King Lear" would seem to rank in a more consummate and universal sense as the tragedy of old age. Cordelia dies, Antigone survives.

It is always important, in studying Shakespeare's intentions in any particular play, to discriminate between those parts of it which he simply accepted from his sources, and those which he added and adapted of his own initiative. The suggestion that he deliberately purposed to make "King Lear" the typical close of what may be called a tragic Seven Ages—or rather Five Ages—series, is strengthened when we find that the fatal issue of the story is of his own invention. "Romeo and Juliet," "Hamlet," "Othello," and "Macbeth," were all ready-made tragedies as they came to his hand; "King Lear" was a romance which, in the face of numerous authorities, he turned into a tragedy. The story must have been known to him in at least four variants: in the prose of Holinshed, in the verse of "A Mirour for Magistrates" and of "The Faery Queen," and in the dramatic form given it by the nameless author of "The True Chronicle Historie of King Leir and his Three Daughters." In all of these versions—and indeed in all versions of the story except the ballad in Percy's "Reliques,"

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which is probably of later date than the play — Lear and Cordelia are victorious, and spend several prosperous years after the unhappy episode is ended. Shakespeare, on the other hand, was determined that it should be no episode, but a catastrophe, a conclusion. A romance with a “happy ending,” such as he afterwards produced in “Cymbeline” and “The Winter’s Tale”—such as actually, in Nahum Tate’s version, supplanted “Lear” itself — would doubtless have been more popular from the first. But it did not suit his purpose. In his mind — so I suggest — the play did not stand alone, an independent entity, but was part of a great whole. He wanted a fifth act for his “Tragédie Humaine” and he saw it in the story of Lear. He remembered, too, that in Sidney’s “Arcadia” there occurred a very similar story of a Paphlagonian king who, “drunk in his affection to an unlawful and unnatural son, suffered himself so to be governed by him that ere he was aware he had left himself nothing but the name of a king ; which the son shortly wearying of too, with many indignities he threw the father out of his seat and put out his eyes.” This second example of the barbarity of the younger to the older generation Shakespeare indissolubly welded with the first. He added, of his own motive, that crowning incident in the tragedy of old — enfeeblement of intellect, delusion, madness. The tempest of the brain he accompanied and intensified by a tempest of the elements, of which, again, there was no hint in his sources. And thus, by selection and amplification, he built up the giant edifice of this terrible last act to the drama of human life.

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That the theme of "King Lear" was originally a folk-tale there can be little doubt. The three daughters — the two elder wicked and the youngest virtuous — belong unmistakably to popular tradition. Indeed a variant of the tale survives — mixed up with the "Cinderella" theme — in the Suffolk story of "Cap o' Rushes."¹ In this version the Cordelia-sister, when asked by her father how much she loves him, replies, "I love you as fresh meat loves salt"; and, being disowned on account of this seemingly inadequate answer, contrives, by serving up a dinner of entirely unsalted meat, to convince the offended parent that her figure of speech was really very much to the point. When the tale passed into what was accepted as serious history, the compilers did their best to rationalise it. According to Holinshed, for example, Lear gave up only half his kingdom to the husbands of Goneril and Regan; and they, after a considerable time, "thinking long ere the government of the land did come to their hands, arose against him in armour, and reft from him the governance of the whole." In "A Mirour for Magistrates," Lear disinherits Cordelia for her supposed coldness towards him, but the partition of the kingdom is forced upon him by the rebellion of his British sons-in-law. In Spenser, who tells the story very briefly, the division of the kingdom is to take place immediately, but it is to be an equal division, and there is no suggestion that the daughter who is loudest in her protestations of love is to have the largest share. In the old play of "King Leir," Skalliger, an evil-minded noble, suggests the divi-

¹ See "English Fairy Tales," collected by Joseph Jacobs. London, 1890, p. 51.

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sion of the kingdom in proportion to the professions of love ; but Leir expressly disclaims any such design. On the other hand he provides himself with an ingenious motive for putting his daughters' affection to the test. Cordella — it was Spenser who first called her Cordelia — is altogether indisposed to marriage ; and Leir, never doubting that she will outbid her sisters in vehemence of protestation, intends “to take her at the vantage” and ask her to make good her professions by marrying the man whom he shall choose for her —

“Even as she doth protest she loves me best,
Ile say, Then, daughter, graunt me one request,
To shew thou lovest me as thy sisters doe,
Accept a husband, whom myselfe will woo.”

This is not a very brilliant device ; but it shows that the dramatist was alive to the absurdity of the old King's conduct, and wanted to soften it down. In short, all the authorities with whom Shakespeare must have been acquainted¹ tried, in a greater or less degree, to dress up the fairy tale in a disguise of historic or dramatic plausibility.

Now it is curious, and not easily explicable, that Shakespeare should have rejected all rationalising of the story, and gone out of his way, it would seem, to thrust the fairy-tale element into the foreground. The necessity for dramatic compression would, of course, lead him to prefer the version which made King Lear's transference of power immediate and complete ; and the putting up of the kingdom to a sort of auction, in which the

¹ There is no good ground for doubting that Shakespeare knew the old play.

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princesses should outbid one another in effusiveness, was a touch of senility (suggested, though not acted on, in the old play) that admirably accorded with his general design. But, having made King Lear conceive this plan, why should the poet at once proceed to show that the portions are predetermined, and the boasting-match an empty form? It is probable enough that Lear, nothing doubting that Cordelia's love will be the loudest, should mentally, or even on paper, have mapped out for her the largest share; but why should he reveal this fact by openly assigning their portions to Goneril and Regan before Cordelia has spoken? Dr. Bucknill has found in this inconsistency a proof that Shakespeare would have us regard Lear as mad from the outset; but in that case how is it that none of those around him notice his aberration? It cannot be urged that they do notice it, but are silent out of respect. Kent, far from being silent, actually declares that Lear is "mad," yet omits to call attention to this crowning proof of insanity. I have heard it ingeniously argued that dramatic effect, the rhetorical working-up of the scene, demanded that after each daughter's speech the King should instantly assign her her portion. The fact is surely the other way: the dramatic effect would be greatly heightened if the King listened with an inscrutable countenance to his daughters' protestations, and reserved to the last the apportionment of their dowers. But even if the dramatic-effect argument were good in itself, it would be a poor defence; for the effect which is attained at the cost of a glaring inconsistency is scarcely worth having. On the whole, I can-

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not but think that we have here one of those pieces of inexplicable incuriousness, not to say slovenliness, that we so often encounter in Shakespeare. Dr. Bucknill is probably right in supposing that Lear's failure to keep his counsel, his blurting out of the fact that he has mentally anticipated the result of the test, is to be taken as a symptom, if not of madness, at any rate of the forgetful impatience of senility; but it is none the less a fault to have made so gross a self-contradiction pass unnoticed by all the bystanders.

The truth is, no doubt, that Shakespeare felt it impossible to dissemble the fairy-tale element in the groundwork of his play (the conduct of Cordelia being, indeed, as improbable as that of Lear) and thought it best to face the improbabilities and have done with them, as rapidly as possible. The first scene of "King Lear" is much more of a mere prologue than the opening passages of "Hamlet," "Macbeth," or "Othello." The abundance of rhyme in it may perhaps be taken as a confession of its more or less conventional character. It was a favourite principle of the late Francisque Sarcey that an audience has no right to cavil at a dramatist's preliminary assumptions, so long as the action he deduces from them is logical and interesting. Shakespeare seems to have anticipated this principle, and to have hastened through the preliminaries of "King Lear" in his impatience to get at the essential action. It will be noticed that the starting-point of the under-plot is also very lightly hurried over. Not only Gloucester, but the acute and capable Edgar, falls a victim with astonishing facility to the machinations of Edmund.

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Shakespeare probably felt that he had not space within the narrow limits of drama to go fully into these matters. He must state his assumptions briefly, and trust to the good-will of his audience to accept them. As for Edmund, he makes him adopt precisely the method of Iago, and achieve in about five minutes a triumph of perfidy which Iago needed two whole acts to carry through. Thus the preliminaries of the action are dismissed in two rapid scenes, making just half of the first act; and space is left for the leisurely development of the moral and psychological consequences.

It would be idle to repeat the eulogies passed by a thousand critics upon the great central scenes of the tragedy. Disquisitions upon Shakespeare's mastery of this or that branch of technical knowledge are always to be taken with reserve; but there is no shadow of doubt that he has indicated the progressive phases of Lear's insanity with an accuracy in which the scrutiny of experts can find no flaw. Equally certain is it that he discriminates with astonishing nicety between the real frenzy of Lear, the assumed idiocy of Edgar, and the professional and ironic insanity of the Fool. This symphony of madness is one of the most extraordinary inventions in literature; but it seems to me, I own, that Shakespeare paid dear for it in the inevitable frigidity of Edgar's ravings. Critics have objected, not without some reason, to the blinding of Gloucester, as an intolerable brutality. Shakespeare borrowed it from the "Arcadia" because he required, as a pendent to the calamity of Lear, another calamity comparable in magnitude and yet clearly differ-

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ent. Simply to turn Gloucester out of his castle and send him wandering would have been to perpetrate a tedious anti-climax ; so he accepted Sidney's suggestion, and made Gloucester's physical blindness the counterpart to the darkening of Lear's mental vision. But to explain his retention of this feature of the original story is not necessarily to justify the enactment of Cornwall's atrocity upon the open stage. The incident brings home to us once more the paradox of the Elizabethan audience — its power of accepting, and even demanding, in intimate juxtaposition, the most exquisite emanations of the human spirit and crude survivals of barbarism in language and manners.

The closing scenes of the play lack something of that unity of dramatic impulse which carries us forward so irresistibly in "Hamlet" and "Othello" ; but in pathos and sublimity they are peerless. If, as I have ventured to fancy, Shakespeare felt that in the conclusion of "Lear" he was ending, not this play alone, but a great tragic cycle — a processional pageant of human destiny — he certainly rose to the occasion with a mastery unexcelled in any earlier passage of the vast creation. Never before or since has the passing of old age been depicted with such grandeur of simplicity. By how many death-beds, to how many thousands of men and women, must Kent's immortal lines have recurred, as the consummate, the only possible, utterance of the emotion of the moment : —

“Vex not his ghost : O, let him pass ! he hates him
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.”

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Be it noted that it is of old age, and nothing else, that Lear dies. Encompassed by cruelty, in a time of bloody deeds, he has yet suffered no physical injury. He shows no symptom of actual disease; he succumbs to sheer exhaustion of the vital forces. Shakespeare felt that dagger and bowl would here have been out of place. A violent death would have been as illogical as a "happy ending." He was writing the Tragedy of Eld, and to that there is but one conclusion. It is Nature herself that brings the quietus.

WILLIAM ARCHER.

KING LEAR

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ¹

LEAR, king of Britain.
KING OF FRANCE.
DUKE OF BURGUNDY.
DUKE OF CORNWALL.
DUKE OF ALBANY.
EARL OF KENT.
EARL OF GLOUCESTER.
EDGAR, son to Gloucester.
EDMUND, bastard son to Gloucester.
CURAN, a courtier.
Old Man, tenant to Gloucester.
Doctor.
Fool.
OSWALD, steward to Goneril.
A captain employed by Edmund.
Gentleman attendant on Cordelia.
Herald.
Servants to Cornwall.

GONERIL, }
REGAN, } daughters to Lear.
CORDELIA, }

Knights of Lear's train, Captains, Messengers, Soldiers, and Attendants.

SCENE: *Britain*

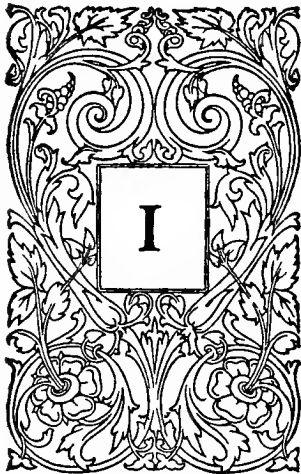
¹ This play was first printed in Quarto in 1608, when two impressions were published, both with somewhat confused text. An improved version from a different transcript was supplied by the First Folio, which first divided the play into Acts and Scenes. Rowe first added a list of the "dramatis personæ" and indicated the general "Scene."



ACT FIRST — SCENE I
KING LEAR'S PALACE

Enter KENT, GLOUCESTER, and EDMUND

KENT



THOUGHT THE KING
had more affected the Duke of
Albany than Cornwall.

GLOU. It did always seem so
to us: but now, in the division
of the kingdom, it appears not
which of the dukes he values
most; for equalities are so
weighed that curiosity in neither
can make choice of either's
moiety.

KENT. Is not this your son,
my lord?

GLOU. His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge: I
have so often blushed to acknowledge him that now
I am brazed to it.

10

¹ *more affected*] showed greater affection for.

KENT. I cannot conceive you.

GLOU. Sir, this young fellow's mother could: whereupon she grew round-wombed, and had indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault?

KENT. I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper.

GLOU. But I have, sir, a son by order of law, some year elder than this, who yet is no dearer in my account: though this knave came something saucily into the world ²⁰ before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair; there was good sport at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledged. Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund?

EDM. No, my lord.

GLOU. My lord of Kent: remember him hereafter as my honourable friend.

EDM. My services to your lordship.

KENT. I must love you, and sue to know you better.

EDM. Sir, I shall study deserving. ³⁰

GLOU. He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again. The king is coming.

5-6 *equalities* . . . *moiety*] There is such well-balanced equality in the distribution that close scrutiny cannot determine one portion to be any greater than the other. For *equalities*, the reading of the early Quartos, the Folios read *qualities*, which is plausible. "Moiety" commonly stands for "portion," not necessarily "half."

10 *brazed*] brazened, hardened.

17 *proper*] goodly, handsome.

19 *account*] esteem.

30 *study deserving*] study to be worthy (of your acquaintance).

31 *out*] abroad, away from home.

Sennet. Enter one bearing a coronet, KING LEAR, CORNWALL, ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, CORDELIA, and Attendants

LEAR. Attend the lords of France and Burgundy,
Gloucester.

GLOU. I shall, my liege. [*Exeunt Gloucester and Edmund.*]

LEAR. Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.
Give me the map there. Know we have divided
In three our kingdom: and 't is our fast intent
To shake all cares and business from our age,
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we
Unburthen'd crawl toward death. Our son of Corn-
wall,

40

And you, our no less loving son of Albany,
We have this hour a constant will to publish
Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife
May be prevented now. The princes, France and Bur-
gundy,

33 (stage direction) *Sennet*] A note of music commonly indicating the entrance or exit of important characters.

Attend the lords] Bid the lords attend upon us.

35 *darker*] more secret. The king has already indicated his general intention of distributing his dominions. He now discloses the hitherto concealed grounds and details of his procedure.

37 *fast intent*] fixed resolve; "constant will" (line 42) has the same meaning. Cf. the Latin "certa voluntas."

38 *from our age*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *of our state*.

39 *Conferring . . . strengths*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *Confirming . . . yeares*. Cf. line 81, *infra*, where the Quartos again read *confirmed* for the Folio reading *conferr'd*.

Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,
 Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,
 And here are to be answer'd. Tell me, my daughters,
 Since now we will divest us both of rule,
 Interest of territory, cares of state,
 Which of you shall we say doth love us most? 50
 That we our largest bounty may extend
 Where nature doth with merit challenge. Goneril,
 Our eldest-born, speak first.

GON. Sir, I love you more than words can wield the
 matter,
 Dearer than eye-sight, space and liberty,
 Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare,
 No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour,
 As much as child e'er loved or father found;
 A love that makes breath poor and speech unable;
 Beyond all manner of so much I love you. 60

COR. [*Aside*] What shall Cordelia do? Love, and be
 silent.

LEAR. Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,

49 *Interest of territory*] Profit derived from possession of territory.

52 *Where nature . . . challenge*] Where natural affection prefers a claim
 equally with merit, where the due of natural affection coincides with
 the due of merit.

54 *than words . . . matter*] than can be fully expressed in words.

55 *space and liberty*] fullest range of liberty.

57 *with grace*] endowed with grace.

59 *unable*] incapable, feeble.

60 *Beyond all manner of so much*] Beyond all such kind of comparisons.

61 *do*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *speak*, which is scarcely in
 keeping with Cordelia's mistrust of verbal professions.

With shadowy forests and with champains rich'd,
 With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,
 We make thee lady. To thine and Albany's issue
 Be this perpetual. What says our second daughter,
 Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak.

REG. I am made of that self metal as my sister,
 And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
 I find she names my very deed of love; 70
 Only she comes too short: that I profess
 Myself an enemy to all other joys
 Which the most precious square of sense possesses,
 And find I am alone felicitate
 In your dear highness' love.

COR. [Aside] Then poor Cordelia!
 And yet not so, since I am sure my love's
 More ponderous than my tongue.

LEAR. To thee and thine hereditary ever
 Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,
 No less in space, validity and pleasure, 80

63 *with champains rich'd*] with open plains enriched.

68 *self*] self-same.

70 *my very deed of love*] the exact state of my own love.

73 *Which . . . possesses*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *professes* for *possesses*. *Square of sense* is difficult; *spirit* and *sphere* have been adopted by some editors for *square*. But Regan refers to the joys which are associated with the very quintessence of sensibility, and "the most precious square" may well mean "the most precious segment, the summit or acme."

74 *felicitate*] made happy.

76 *yet not so*] *sc.* poor in love.

77 *ponderous*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *richer*.

80 *validity*] value, worth.

Than that conferr'd on Goneril. Now, our joy,
 Although the last, not least, to whose young love
 The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
 Strive to be interest'd, what can you say to draw
 A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

COR. Nothing, my lord.

LEAR. Nothing!

COR. Nothing.

LEAR. Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

COR. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave 90
 My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty
 According to my bond; nor more nor less.

LEAR. How, how, Cordelia! mend your speech a
 little,
 Lest it may mar your fortunes.

COR. Good my lord,
 You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I
 Return those duties back as are right fit,

81 *conferr'd*] See note on line 39, *supra*.

82 *the last, not least*] Thus the Quartos. The expression is proverbial.
 The Folios read wrongly *our last and least*.

82-84 *to whose young love . . . interest'd*] Thus the Folios, save that
interest'd (*i. e.*, interested, concerned) is Jennens' change for the
 original *interest*, which may be a form of "interested." In the Quartos
in our deere loue follows the word *least* without any stop, and the
 whole clause *to whose young love . . . interest'd* is omitted.

83 *milk*] the milk-producing pastures.

89 *Nothing will come of nothing*] Cf. the Latin proverb "Ex nihilo nihil
 fit." Lear repeats the phrase, I, iv, 42, *infra*.

92 *my bond*] my obligation of filial duty.

96 *Return . . . right fit*] Render those filial duties as they are rightly to
 be rendered.

Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
 Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
 They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
 That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
 Half my love with him, half my care and duty: 101
 Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,
 To love my father all.

LEAR. But goes thy heart with this?

COR. Ay, good my lord.

LEAR. So young, and so untender?

COR. So young, my lord, and true.

LEAR. Let it be so; thy truth then be thy dower:
 For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
 The mysteries of Hecate, and the night;
 By all the operation of the orbs 110
 From whom we do exist and cease to be;
 Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
 Propinquity and property of blood,
 And as a stranger to my heart and me
 Hold thee from this for ever. The barbarous Scythian,
 Or he that makes his generation messes

100 *my plight*] my plighted troth.

109 *Hecate*] The goddess of night. The word is pronounced as a dissyllable. Cf. *Macb.*, II, i, 52 and note.

113 *Propinquity . . . blood*] Kinship and blood relationship.

115 *The barbarous Scythian*] The Scythians are again instanced as the extreme type of barbarism in *Tit. Andr.*, I, i, 131: "Was ever *Scythia* half so *barbarous*?"

116 *he . . . messes*] he that turns his progeny into messes of food, he that eats his children. Hakluyt quotes an account of such cannibal practices among the Tartars (*ed.* 1905, Vol. I, p. 51).

To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
 Be as well neighbour'd, pitied and relieved,
 As thou my sometime daughter.

KENT. Good my liege, —

LEAR. Peace, Kent!

120

Come not between the dragon and his wrath.
 I loved her most, and thought to set my rest
 On her kind nursery. Hence, and avoid my sight!
 So be my grave my peace, as here I give
 Her father's heart from her! Call France. Who stirs?
 Call Burgundy. Cornwall and Albany,
 With my two daughters' dowers digest this third:
 Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.
 I do invest you jointly with my power,
 Pre-eminence and all the large effects
 That troop with majesty. Ourself, by monthly course,
 With reservation of an hundred knights
 By you to be sustain'd, shall our abode
 Make with you by due turns. Only we still retain
 The name and all the additions to a king;
 The sway, revenue, execution of the rest,
 Beloved sons, be yours: which to confirm,
 This coronet part betwixt you.

130

122 *set my rest*] stake my all is a technical expression in the card game of "primero."

123 *Hence, and avoid my sight*] These words are clearly addressed to Cordelia, and not to Kent, as many editors suggest.

127 *digest*] absorb.

128 *marry her*] find her a husband.

130 *the large effects*] the spacious attributes or dignities.

135 *additions to a king*] titles of a king.

KENT. Royal Lear,
Whom I have ever honour'd as my king,
Loved as my father, as my master follow'd, 140
As my great patron thought on in my prayers, —

LEAR. The bow is bent and drawn; make from the
shaft.

KENT. Let it fall rather, though the fork invade
The region of my heart: be Kent unmannerly,
When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man?
Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak,
When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's
bound,
When majesty stoops to folly. Reverse thy doom,
And in thy best consideration check
This hideous rashness: answer my life my judgement, 150
Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;
Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound
Reverbs no hollowness.

LEAR. Kent, on thy life, no more.

KENT. My life I never held but as a pawn
To wage against thy enemies, nor fear to lose it,
Thy safety being the motive.

LEAR. Out of my sight!

143 *fork*] arrow-head. Cf. *As you like it*, II, i, 24, "forked heads," *i. e.*, arrow-heads.

148 *stoops . . . Reverse thy doom*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *falls to folly reserve thy state* (*i. e.*, retain thy power).

149 *best*] most careful, most deliberate.

153 *Reverbs no hollowness*] Reverberates or proclaims no emptiness or insincerity.

155 *To wage*] To wager, stake, or hazard.

KENT. See better, Lear, and let me still remain
The true blank of thine eye.

LEAR. Now, by Apollo, —

KENT. Now, by Apollo, king,
Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.

LEAR. O, vassal! miscreant! 160
[Laying his hand on his sword.]

ALB. } Dear sir, forbear.
CORN. }

KENT. Do;
Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow
Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy doom;
Or, whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,
I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

LEAR. Hear me, recreant!
On thy allegiance, hear me!
Since thou hast sought to make us break our vow,
Which we durst never yet, and with strain'd pride
To come between our sentence and our power, 170
Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,
Our potency made good, take thy reward.
Five days we do allot thee, for provision
To shield thee from diseases of the world,
And on the sixth to turn thy hated back

158 *blank*] The white mark forming the bull's eye of the target. Kent appeals to Lear to let him remain by him as the mark by which to guide the aim of his vision.

170 *power*] *sc.* to carry out our sentence.

172 *Our potency made good*] By way of proving the reality of our authority.

174 *diseases*] troubles, distresses. Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *disasters*.

Upon our kingdom: if on the tenth day following
Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,
The moment is thy death. Away! By Jupiter,
This shall not be revoked.

KENT. Fare thee well, king: sith thus thou wilt
appear, 180
Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here.
[*To Cordelia*] The gods to their dear shelter take thee,
maid,
That justly think'st and hast most rightly said!
[*To Regan and Goneril*] And your large speeches may your
deeds approve,
That good effects may spring from words of love.
Thus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu;
He'll shape his old course in a country new. [*Exit.*]

Flourish. Re-enter GLOUCESTER, with FRANCE, BURGUNDY, and
Attendants

GLOU. Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.
LEAR. My lord of Burgundy,
We first address towards you, who with this king 190
Hath rivall'd for our daughter: what, in the least,

176 *tenth*] Thus all the early editions. Some modern editors substitute
seventh, which suits the context better.

181 *Freedom*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *Friendship*, perhaps
a better antithesis to "banishment."

184 *approve*] prove, make good.

187 *his old course*] his career in old age.

188 GLOU. *Here's France . . . lord*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios give
the line to CORDELIA.

191 *rivall'd*] competed.

Will you require in present dower with her,
Or cease your quest of love?

BUR. Most royal majesty,
I crave no more than what your highness offer'd,
Nor will you tender less.

LEAR. Right noble Burgundy,
When she was dear to us, we did hold her so;
But now her price is fall'n. Sir, there she stands:
If aught within that little seeming substance,
Or all of it, with our displeasure pieced,
And nothing more, may fitly like your grace, 200
She's there, and she is yours.

BUR. I know no answer.

LEAR. Will you, with those infirmities she owes,
Unfriended, new adopted to our hate,
Dower'd with our curse and stranger'd with our oath,
Take her, or leave her?

BUR. Pardon me, royal sir;
Election makes not up on such conditions.

LEAR. Then leave her, sir; for, by the power that
made me,
I tell you all her wealth. [*To France*] For you, great king,
I would not from your love make such a stray,

196 *hold her so*] hold her worthy of a great dowry.

198 *that little seeming substance*] that slight looking body.

199 *pieced*] supplemented.

204 *stranger'd . . . oath*] abjured by us, made a stranger to us, alienated from us by oath.

206 *Election makes not up*] Choice makes no decision, no choice is possible.

209-210 *I would not . . . To match*] I would not neglect or ignore your love to such an extent as to match.

To match you where I hate; therefore beseech you 210
 To avert your liking a more worthier way
 Than on a wretch whom nature is ashamed
 Almost to acknowledge hers.

FRANCE. This is most strange,
 That she, that even but now was your best object,
 The argument of your praise, balm of your age,
 Most best, most dearest, should in this trice of time
 Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle
 So many folds of favour. Sure, her offence
 Must be of such unnatural degree
 That monsters it, or your fore-vouch'd affection 220
 Fall'n into taint: which to believe of her,
 Must be a faith that reason without miracle
 Could never plant in me.

COR. I yet beseech your majesty, —
 If for I want that glib and oily art,
 To speak and purpose not, since what I well intend,
 I'll do't before I speak, — that you make known
 It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,

214 *your best object*] the "delight of your eye"; *best* is omitted from the Folios; *object* stands for "object of attraction." Cf. *Mids. N. Dr.*, IV, i, 167: "The *object* and the pleasure of mine eye."

215 *argument*] theme.

220-221 *That monsters it, or . . . into taint:*] That befits a monster, or as makes it monstrous before your previously professed affection could have suffered taint. The Quartos read *Falne* for which the Folios substitute *Fall*.

227 *It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness*] Cordelia hyperbolically exaggerates the absurdity of the charges brought against her. She scornfully mentions the worst crimes possible.

No unchaste action, or dishonour'd step,
 That hath deprived me of your grace and favour;
 But even for want of that for which I am richer, 230
 A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue
 As I am glad I have not, though not to have it
 Hath lost me in your liking.

LEAR. Better thou
 Hadst not been born than not to have pleased me better.

FRANCE. Is it but this? a tardiness in nature
 Which often leaves the history unspoke
 That it intends to do? My lord of Burgundy,
 What say you to the lady? Love's not love
 When it is mingled with regards that stand
 Aloof from the entire point. Will you have her? 240
 She is herself a dowry.

BUR. Royal Lear,
 Give but that portion which yourself proposed,
 And here I take Cordelia by the hand,
 Duchess of Burgundy.

LEAR. Nothing: I have sworn; I am firm.

BUR. I am sorry then you have so lost a father
 That you must lose a husband.

COR. Peace be with Burgundy!
 Since that respects of fortune are his love,
 I shall not be his wife.

230 *for want . . . richer*] The construction is obscure; "for which" must mean "for wanting which."

231 *still-soliciting*] constantly importuning.

239-240 *with regards . . . the entire point*] with scruples which are irrelevant to the essential or main point.

248 *respects*] considerations.

FRANCE. Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich being
 poor, 250
 Most choice forsaken, and most loved despised,
 Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon:
 Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.
 Gods, gods! 't is strange that from their cold'st neglect
 My love should kindle to inflamed respect.
 Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance,
 Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France:
 Not all the dukes of waterish Burgundy
 Can buy this unprized precious maid of me.
 Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind: 260
 Thou lovest here, a better where to find.

LEAR. Thou hast her, France: let her be thine, for we
 Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see
 That face of hers again. ~~Therefore be gone~~
 Without our grace, our love, our benison.
 Come, noble Burgundy.

*[Flourish. Exeunt all but France, Goneril,
 Regan, and Cordelia.]*

FRANCE. Bid farewell to your sisters.

COR. The jewels of our father, with wash'd eyes
 Cordelia leaves you: I know you what you are;

255 *inflamed respect*] increased regard.

258 *waterish*] well-watered.

259 *unprized*] priceless. "Unvalued" is similarly used for "invaluable"; cf. *Rich. III*, I, iv, 27: "unvalued jewels."

260 *though unkind*] though they are unkind, though they lack natural affection. Cf. *III*, iv, 70, *infra*: "his unkind daughters."

268 *The jewels*] Thus the early editions, for which Rowe substituted *Ye jewels*.

And, like a sister, am most loath to call 270
 Your faults as they are named. Use well our father:
 To your professed bosoms I commit him:
 But yet, alas, stood I within his grace,
 I would prefer him to a better place.
 So farewell to you both.

REG. Prescribe not us our duties.

GON. Let your study
 Be to content your lord, who hath received you
 At fortune's alms. You have obedience scanted,
 And well are worth the want that you have wanted.

COR. Time shall unfold what plaited cunning hides:
 Who cover faults, at last shame them derides. 281
 Well may you prosper!

FRANCE. Come, my fair Cordelia.

[Exeunt France and Cordelia.]

GON. Sister, it is not a little I have to say of what
 most nearly appertains to us both. I think our father
 will hence to-night.

272 *bosoms*] affections. Cf. V, iii, 50, *infra*, "the common *bosom*," i. e.,
 the affection of the common people.

279 *well . . . wanted*] well deserve to suffer the want of that affection
 (from your husband) which you have shown yourself to be without
 (for your father). Thus the Folios. The Quartos awkwardly read
worth the worth for *worth the want*.

280 *plaited*] twisted, crafty. The Folios read *plighted* and the Quartos
pleated. "Plighted" is frequently found in the sense of "folded."

281 *Who cover . . . derides*] The old editions read *covers* for *cover* which
 is more grammatical. For *shame them* of the Quartos the Folios
 substitute *with shame*, which is difficult. The line seems a reminiscence
 of *Proverbs*, xxviii, 13: "He that *covereth* his sins shall not
 prosper."

REG. That's most certain, and with you; next month with us.

GON. You see how full of changes his age is; the observation we have made of it hath not been little: he always loved our sister most; and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly. ²⁹¹

REG. 'T is the infirmity of his age: yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself.

GON. The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash; then must we look to receive from his age, not alone the imperfections of long ingrafted condition, but therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them.

REG. Such unconstant starts are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banishment. ³⁰⁰

GON. There is further compliment of leave-taking between France and him. Pray you, let's hit together: if our father carry authority with such dispositions as he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us.

REG. We shall further think on 't.

GON. We must do something, and i' the heat.

[*Exeunt.*]

291 *grossly*] obviously, manifestly.

294 *The best . . . time*] The period of his life when he was in the prime of his bodily powers.

296 *long ingrafted condition*] disposition confirmed by long habit.

299 *unconstant starts*] fickle impulses.

302-304 *let's hit together . . . offend us*] let's join together in our course of action; if our father assert his authority in such headstrong temper as he now manifests, this final surrender to us of his kingdom will merely breed trouble for us.

306 *i' the heat*] Cf. the proverb "Strike while the iron's hot."

SCENE II — THE EARL OF GLOUCESTER'S CASTLE

Enter EDMUND, with a letter

EDM. Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law
 My services are bound. Wherefore should I
 Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
 The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
 For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
 Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base?
 When my dimensions are as well compact,
 My mind as generous and my shape as true,
 As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
 With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base? 10
 Who in the lusty stealth of nature take
 More composition and fierce quality
 Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,
 Go to the creating a whole tribe of fops,

3 *Stand in the plague of custom*] Be subjected to the taint that custom or tradition lays on bastards.

4 *The curiosity . . . deprive me*] The scrupulousness or false delicacy of civilised society to disinherit me.

6 *Lag of a brother*] Lagging behind a brother in years; older than my brother.

base] "A base son" was a synonym for "a bastard." The words have no etymological connection. Cf. line 10, *infra*.

7 *my dimensions . . . compact*] my proportions are put together as well.

12 *More composition*] More effective blending.

14 *fops*] fools. Cf. line 113, *infra*: "the excellent *foppery* (*i. e.*, foolishness) of the world," and I, iv, 165, "foppish" (*i. e.*, foolish). Shakespeare also uses the verb "*fop*" in the sense of "dupe," "cheat"; cf. *Othello*, IV, ii, 195.

Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well then,
 Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land:
 Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
 As to the legitimate: fine word, "legitimate"!
 Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed
 And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
 Shall top the legitimate. I grow; I prosper:
 Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

20

Enter GLOUCESTER

GLOU. Kent banish'd thus! and France in choler
 parted!
 And the king gone to-night! subscribed his power!
 Confined to exhibition! All this done
 Upon the gad! Edmund, how now! what news?
 EDM. So please your lordship, none.

[Putting up the letter.

GLOU. Why so earnestly seek you to put up that
 letter?

EDM. I know no news, my lord.

GLOU. What paper were you reading?

30

21 *Shall top the*] Shall get above, surpass the. Thus Capell for the old reading *Shall to the*, which has been explained as "Shall come up to the," "get on a level with the."

23 *in choler parted*] departed in anger. There is no evidence in the previous scene (cf. I, i, 301, *supra*), that the King of France and Lear departed otherwise than amicably. But the French king is called by Lear "hot-blooded" (II, iv, 211, *infra*).

24 *subscribed*] yielded (by a written surrender).

25 *Confined to exhibition*] Restricted to an allowance.

26 *Upon the gad*] Upon the spur of the moment.

EDM. Nothing, my lord.

GLOU. No? What needed then that terrible dispatch of it into your pocket? the quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself. Let's see: come, if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles.

EDM. I beseech you, sir, pardon me: it is a letter from my brother, that I have not all o'er-read; and for so much as I have perused, I find it not fit for your o'er-looking.

GLOU. Give me the letter, sir.

EDM. I shall offend, either to detain or give it. The 40 contents, as in part I understand them, are to blame.

GLOU. Let's see, let's see.

EDM. I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote this but as an essay or taste of my virtue.

GLOU. [*Reads*] "This policy and reverence of age makes the world bitter to the best of our times; keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish them. I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny; who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffered. Come to me, that of this I may speak more. If our father would sleep till I waked him, you 50 should enjoy half his revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your brother,
EDGAR."

32 *terrible*] terrifying, implying terror.

38 *for your o'er-looking*] for your observation or inspection. Cf. V, i, 50, *infra*: "I will o'erlook thy paper."

44 *an essay or taste*] a trial or test.

45 *policy and reverence of age*] policy or practice of reverencing age.

46 *to the best of our times*] to the best years of our life. Cf. I, i, 294, *supra*.

47 *fond*] foolish.

Hum! Conspiracy! — “Sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue!” — My son Edgar! Had he a hand to write this? a heart and brain to breed it in? When came this to you? who brought it?

EDM. It was not brought me, my lord; there’s the cunning of it; I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet.

GLOU. You know the character to be your brother’s?

EDM. If the matter were good, my lord, I durst⁶⁰ swear it were his; but, in respect of that, I would fain think it were not.

GLOU. It is his.

EDM. It is his hand, my lord; but I hope his heart is not in the contents.

GLOU. Hath he never heretofore sounded you in this business?

EDM. Never, my lord: but I have heard him oft maintain it to be fit, that, sons at perfect age, and fathers declining, the father should be as ward to the⁷⁰ son, and the son manage his revenue.

GLOU. O villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter! Abhorred villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! worse than brutish! Go, sirrah, seek him; ay, apprehend him: abominable villain! Where is he?

EDM. I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother till you can derive from him better testimony of his intent,

⁵⁹ *character*] handwriting.

⁶¹ *in respect of that*] in view of the fact that the matter is far from good.

you should run a certain course; where, if you violently proceed against him, mistaking his purpose, it would ⁸⁰ make a great gap in your own honour and shake in pieces the heart of his obedience. I dare pawn down my life for him that he hath wrote this to feel my affection to your honour and to no further pretence of danger.

GLOU. Think you so?

EDM. If your honour judge it meet, I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, and by an auricular assurance have your satisfaction, and that without any further delay than this very evening.

GLOU. He cannot be such a monster —

90

EDM. Nor is not, sure.

GLOU. To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him. Heaven and earth! Edmund, seek him out; wind me into him, I pray you: frame the business after your own wisdom. I would unstate myself, to be in a due resolution.

EDM. I will seek him, sir, presently, convey the business as I shall find means, and acquaint you withal.

79 *a certain course; where*] a safe or secure course; whereas.

84 *pretence of danger*] dangerous purpose or design.

91-93 *Nor is not . . . Heaven and earth*] These words only appear in the Quartos. They are omitted from the Folios. It has been argued that Gloucester's professions of affection for his son are hardly in keeping with his readiness to condemn him, and are best omitted.

94 *wind me into him*] steal or insinuate yourself into his confidence; "me" is the ethic dative.

95-96 *I would unstate . . . resolution*] I would give up my rank and estate in order to assure myself (of the facts).

97 *convey*] tactfully manage.

GLOU. These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us: though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects: love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction; there's son against father: the king falls from bias of nature; there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time: machinations, hollow-ness, treachery and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves. Find out this villain, Edmund; it shall lose thee nothing; do it carefully. And the noble and true-hearted Kent banished! his offence, honesty! 'T is strange. [Exit. 112

EDM. This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune — often the surfeit of our

99-100 *These late eclipses . . . portend no good*] Eclipses were almost universally held at the time to foreshadow calamity.

100-102 *though the wisdom . . . sequent effects*] though natural science or philosophy can account for these eclipses on scientific grounds, yet there is no mistaking their calamitous consequences.

105-109 *This villain . . . graves*] This passage is only in the Folios. It is omitted from the Quartos.

106-107 *falls from bias of nature*] runs counter to his natural disposition; "bias" is strictly the piece of lead which diverts the bowl from the straight course.

113 *foppery*] folly. See note on line 14, *supra*. Edmund in his cynical misanthropy condemns as an empty superstition the current faith in astrology.

114 *the surfeit*] the morbid excesses.

own behaviour — we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon and the stars: as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves and treachers, by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars and adulterers, by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on: an admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star! My father compounded with my mother under the dragon's tail, and my nativity was under Ursa major; so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. Tut, I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing.
Edgar —

127

Enter EDGAR

And pat he comes like the catastrophe of the old comedy: my cue is villanous melancholy, with a sigh like 'Tom o'

118 *treachers*] traitors. Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *Trecherers*. The form "treacher" or "treachour" is not uncommon.

spherical predominance] an astrological term meaning much the same as planetary influence (line 119, *infra*).

120-121 *a divine thrusting on*] a supernatural impulse.

125 *Tut*] Thus Jennens. The Quartos read *Fut*, *i. e.*, "God's foot." The Folios omit the word.

128 *pat he comes . . . old comedy*] In the crude comedies of an old date the catastrophe was brought about in defiance of the natural order of things by the entry of a dominant character in quite unjustifiable circumstances. Cf. the "deus ex machina" of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, 191-192.

129-130 *Tom o' Bedlam*] A mad beggar-man, a half-witted vagrant; cf. "Bedlam beggars" II, iii, 14, *infra*, and note, and III, vii, 102.

Bedlam. O, these eclipses do portend these divisions!
fa, sol, la, mi. 131

EDG. How now, brother Edmund! what serious contemplation are you in?

EDM. I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this other day, what should follow these eclipses.

EDG. Do you busy yourself about that?

EDM. I promise you, the effects he writ of succeed unhappily; as of unnaturalness between the child and the parent; death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities; divisions in state, menaces and maledictions against king and nobles; needless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches, and I know not what.

EDG. How long have you been a sectary astronomical?

EDM. Come, come; when saw you my father last?

EDG. Why, the night gone by.

130 *divisions*] schisms, disunion with a quibbling suggestion of the word in the different sense of "musical modulations."

131 *fa . . . mi*] Edmund sings superciliously some notes of the scale. The words are omitted from the Quartos.

137-138 *succeed unhappily*] have bad results.

138-144 *as of . . . Come, come*] This passage is only found in the Quartos, and is often treated as a spurious interpolation.

141 *diffidences*] breaches of confidence.

141-142 *dissipation of cohorts*] dispersal or dissolution of parties, societies, companionships. The phrase is difficult, and neither substantive is used by Shakespeare elsewhere. "Cohort" has no military significance here; it can only mean a band of persons united in any common cause.

143 *a sectary astronomical*] a devotee of astronomy.

EDM. Spake you with him?

EDG. Ay, two hours together.

EDM. Parted you in good terms? Found you no displeasure in him by word or countenance?

EDG. None at all.

150

EDM. Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended him: and at my entreaty forbear his presence till some little time hath qualified the heat of his displeasure, which at this instant so rageth in him that with the mischief of your person it would scarcely allay.

EDG. Some villain hath done me wrong.

EDM. That's my fear. I pray you, have a continent forbearance till the speed of his rage goes slower, and, as I say, retire with me to my lodging, from whence I will fitly bring you to hear my lord speak: pray ye, go; there's my key: if you do stir abroad, go armed.

161

EDG. Armed, brother!

EDM. Brother, I advise you to the best: go armed: I am no honest man if there be any good meaning towards you: I have told you what I have seen and heard; but faintly, nothing like the image and horror of it: pray you, away.

EDG. Shall I hear from you anon?

154-155 *that with . . . allay*] that with injury done your person it would scarcely subside.

157-163 *That's my fear . . . Brother, I advise you*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos omit the whole passage, between the words *That's my fear* and *Brother I advise you*.

157-158 *have a continent forbearance*] keep a well-controlled distance, a restrained aloofness, deliberately keep away (from him). Cf. line 152, *supra*: "*forbear his presence*."

EDM. I do serve you in this business. [*Exit Edgar.*
 A credulous father, and a brother noble, 170
 Whose nature is so far from doing harms
 That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
 My practices ride easy. I see the business.
 Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit:
 All with me's meet that I can fashion fit. [*Exit.*

SCENE III—THE DUKE OF ALBANY'S PALACE

Enter GONERIL and OSWALD, her steward

GON. Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding
 of his fool?

OSW. Yes, madam.

GON. By day and night he wrongs me; every hour
 He flashes into one gross crime or other,
 That sets us all at odds: I'll not endure it:
 His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us
 On every trifle. When he returns from hunting,
 I will not speak with him; say I am sick:
 If you come slack of former services, 10
 You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer.

173 *practices*] machinations, plots.

175 *All with me's meet . . . fit*] With me every device which I can adapt
 to my purpose is fair game.

4 *By day and night*] Every hour.

5 *flashes*] breaks out. Cf. *Hamlet*, II, i, 33: "The *flash* and outbreak of
 a fiery mind."

Osw. He's coming, madam; I hear him.

[*Horns within.*]

GON. Put on what weary negligence you please,
 You and your fellows; I'd have it come to question:
 If he distaste it, let him to our sister,
 Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one,
 Not to be over-ruled. Idle old man,
 That still would manage those authorities
 That he hath given away! Now, by my life,
 Old fools are babes again, and must be used 20
 With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abused.
 Remember what I tell you.

Osw. Very well, madam.

GON. And let his knights have colder looks among
 you;

What grows of it, no matter; advise your fellows so:
 I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,
 That I may speak: I'll write straight to my sister,
 To hold my very course. Prepare for dinner. [*Exeunt.*]

13 *weary negligence*] listless inattentiveness. Cf. I, iv, 67, *infra*.

15 *distaste*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read more simply *dislike*.

17-21 *Not to be over-ruled . . . seen abused*] These lines are omitted from the Folios, and appear as prose in the Quartos. Line 21 (*With checks . . . abused*) means: With punishments or restrictions in the place of flatteries, when they (*i.e.*, the old fools) are seen to be misled or deceived (as to the true position of affairs).

25-26 *I would breed . . . speak*] These words which are also printed as prose in the Quartos are again omitted from the Folios.

SCENE IV — A HALL IN THE SAME

Enter KENT, disguised

KENT. If but as well I other accents borrow,
That can my speech defuse, my good intent
May carry through itself to that full issue
For which I razed my likeness. Now, banish'd Kent,
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn'd,
So may it come, thy master whom thou lovest
Shall find thee full of labours.

Horns within. Enter LEAR, Knights, and Attendants

LEAR. Let me not stay a jot for dinner; go get it ready. [*Exit an Attendant.*] How now! what art thou?

KENT. A man, sir.

10

LEAR. What dost thou profess? What wouldst thou with us?

KENT. I do profess to be no less than I seem; to serve him truly that will put me in trust; to love him that is honest; to converse with him that is wise and says little; to fear judgement; to fight when I cannot choose, and to eat no fish.

2 *defuse*] disorder, confuse. Kent is anxious to complete his disguise by adopting an accent which shall make his speech indistinct.

7 *full of labours*] ready for any service.

16 *to fear judgement*] to fear the day of judgment.

17 *to eat no fish*] Eating fish was held to be the sign of a Roman Catholic, of one disaffected to the government. Hence "to eat no fish" is equivalent to a profession of loyalty and orthodoxy. Cf. Marston's

LEAR. What art thou?

KENT. A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the king. 20

LEAR. If thou be as poor for a subject as he is for a king, thou art poor enough. What wouldst thou?

KENT. Service.

LEAR. Who wouldst thou serve?

KENT. You.

LEAR. Dost thou know me, fellow?

KENT. No, sir; but you have that in your countenance which I would fain call master.

LEAR. What's that?

KENT. Authority. 30

LEAR. What services canst thou do?

KENT. I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a curious tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message bluntly: that which ordinary men are fit for, I am qualified in, and the best of me is diligence.

LEAR. How old art thou?

KENT. Not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing, nor so old to dote on her for any thing: I have years on my back forty eight.

LEAR. Follow me; thou shalt serve me: if I like thee 40
no worse after dinner, I will not part from thee yet. Dinner, ho, dinner! Where's my knave? my fool? Go you, and call my fool hither. [Exit an Attendant.]

Dutch Courtesan, I, ii, 19-20: "I trust I am none of the wicked that eat fish a' Fridays."

33 *curious*] elaborate, complex.

42 *knave*] lad; a common term of endearment, frequently used by Lear.

Enter OSWALD

You, you, sirrah, where's my daughter?

OSW. So please you, — *[Exit.*

LEAR. What says the fellow there? Call the clotpoll back. *[Exit a Knight.]* Where's my fool, ho? I think the world's asleep.

Re-enter Knight

How now! where's that mongrel?

KNIGHT. He says, my lord, your daughter is not well. 50

LEAR. Why came not the slave back to me when I called him?

KNIGHT. Sir, he answered me in the roundest manner, he would not.

LEAR. He would not!

KNIGHT. My lord, I know not what the matter is; but, to my judgement, your highness is not entertained with that ceremonious affection as you were wont; there's a great abatement of kindness appears as well in the general dependants as in the duke himself also 60 and your daughter.

LEAR. Ha! sayest thou so?

KNIGHT. I beseech you, pardon me, my lord, if I be mistaken; for my duty cannot be silent when I think your highness wronged.

LEAR. Thou but rememberest me of mine own conception: I have perceived a most faint neglect of late;

46 *clotpoll*] clodpate, blockhead.

53 *roundest*] bluntest.

67 *faint*] listless, languid. Cf. I, iii, 13, *supra*, "weary negligence."

which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity than as a very pretence and purpose of unkindness: I will look further into't. But where's my fool? 70 I have not seen him this two days.

KNIGHT. Since my young lady's going into France, sir, the fool hath much pined away.

LEAR. No more of that; I have noted it well. Go you, and tell my daughter I would speak with her. [Exit an Attendant.] Go you, call hither my fool.

[Exit an Attendant.]

Re-enter OSWALD

O, you sir, you, come you hither, sir: who am I, sir?

OSW. My lady's father.

LEAR. My lady's father! my lord's knave: you whore-son dog! you slave! you cur! 80

OSW. I am none of these, my lord; I beseech your pardon.

LEAR. Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal?

[Striking him.]

OSW. I'll not be struck, my lord.

KENT. Nor tripped neither, you base foot-ball player.

[Tripping up his heels.]

LEAR. I thank thee, fellow; thou servest me, and I'll love thee.

KENT. Come, sir, arise, away! I'll teach you differ-

68-69 *mine own jealous . . . very pretence*] my own suspicious punctiliousness than as a deliberate design.

88 *differences*] differences of rank between master and man.

ences: away, away! If you will measure your lubber's length again, tarry: but away! go to; have you wisdom? so. *[Pushes Oswald out.*

LEAR. Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee: there's earnest of thy service. *[Giving Kent money.*

Enter Fool

FOOL. Let me hire him too: here's my coxcomb.

[Offering Kent his cap.

LEAR. How now, my pretty knave! how dost thou?

FOOL. Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.

KENT. Why, fool? 97

FOOL. Why, for taking one's part that's out of favour: nay, an thou canst not smile as the wind sits, thou'lt catch cold shortly: there, take my coxcomb: why, this fellow hath banished two on's daughters, and done the third a blessing against his will; if thou follow him, thou must needs wear my coxcomb. How now, nuncle! Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters!

LEAR. Why, my boy?

FOOL. If I gave them all my living, I'd keep my coxcombs myself. There's mine; beg another of thy daughters.

LEAR. Take heed, sirrah; the whip. 109

FOOL. Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be

93 *earnest*] earnest money, payment in advance.

94 *coxcomb*] the fool's cap.

103 *nuncle*] a contraction of "mine uncle." Fools usually addressed their superiors thus.

whipped out, when Lady the brach may stand by the fire and stink.

LEAR. A pestilent gall to me!

FOOL. Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.

LEAR. Do.

FOOL. Mark it, nuncle:

Have more than thou showest,
 Speak less than thou knowest,
 Lend less than thou owest,
 Ride more than thou goest, 120
 Learn more than thou trowest,
 Set less than thou throwest;
 Leave thy drink and thy whore,
 And keep in-a-door,
 And thou shalt have more
 Than two tens to a score.

KENT. This is nothing, fool.

FOOL. Then 't is like the breath of an unfee'd lawyer, you gave me nothing for't. Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle? 130

111 *Lady the brach*] a bitch hound. Thus Steevens. The Folios read *the Lady Brach*; the Quartos *Lady oth'e brach*. Cf. *1 Hen. IV*, III, i, 237: "I'd rather hear *Lady my brach* howl in Irish." For "brach," see III, vi, 68, *infra*.

119 *owest*] ownest, possessest.

120 *goest*] walkest on foot.

121 *trowest*] trustest, believest. The line means "Hear or learn more than you believe; don't believe all you hear." "Trow" is found in the sense both of "believe" and "know." But here the former sense suits the context.

122 *Set less than thou throwest*] A confused way of saying "Keep something in reserve when you stake a throw of the dice."

LEAR. Why, no, boy; nothing can be made out of nothing.

FOOL. [*To Kent*] Prithee, tell him, so much the rent of his land comes to: he will not believe a fool.

LEAR. A bitter fool!

FOOL. Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet fool?

LEAR. No, lad; teach me.

FOOL. That lord that counsell'd thee
 To give away thy land, 140
 Come place him here by me;
 Do thou for him stand:
 The sweet and bitter fool
 Will presently appear;
 The one in motley here,
 The other found out there.

LEAR. Dost thou call me fool, boy?

FOOL. All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast born with.

KENT. This is not altogether fool, my lord. 150

FOOL. No, faith, lords and great men will not let me; if I had a monopoly out, they would have part on't:

139-154 *That lord . . . they'll be snatching*] This passage is omitted from the Folios.

139 *That lord that counsell'd thee*] In the old play of King Lear, Lear is advised by a lord called Scalliger to divide his kingdom among his children. No such counsellor figures in Shakespeare's piece.

145 *motley*] the ordinary parti-coloured dress of the domestic fool.

152 *if I had a monopoly out*] if a patent of monopoly (in folly) had been granted me.

and ladies too, they will not let me have all the fool to myself; they'll be snatching. Give me an egg, nuncle, and I'll give thee two crowns.

LEAR. What two crowns shall they be? 156

FOOL. Why, after I have cut the egg in the middle and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest thy crown i' the middle and gavest away both parts, thou borest thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt: thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown when thou gavest thy golden one away. If I speak like myself in this, let him be whipped that first finds it so.

[*Singing*] Fools had ne'er less wit in a year;
 For wise men are grown foppish,
 And know not how their wits to wear,
 Their manners are so apish.

LEAR. When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah? 169

FOOL. I have used it, nuncle, ever since thou madest thy daughters thy mother: for when thou gavest them the rod and putttest down thine own breeches,

153 *ladies too*] Thus some copies of the First Quarto, though most copies read with the Second and Third Quartos *and lodes too*.

160 *borest thine ass . . . back*] An allusion to Æsop's fable of the old man who tried to please everybody.

162 *like myself*] like a fool. The fool means that he is in earnest.

164-165 *Fools . . . foppish*] Fools never at any time enjoyed less recognition; for wise men are grown foolish. For "foppish" see *supra*, I, ii, 14, "fops," and 113, "foppery" (*i. e.*, foolishness).

170 *I have used it*] It has been my use or habit.

[*Singing*] Then they for sudden joy did weep,
 And I for sorrow sung,
 That such a king should play bo-peep,
 And go the fools among.

Prithee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy fool to lie: I would fain learn to lie.

LEAR. An you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipped. 179

FOOL. I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are: they'll have me whipped for speaking true, thou'lt have me whipped for lying, and sometimes I am whipped for holding my peace. I had rather be any kind o' thing than a fool: and yet I would not be thee, nuncle; thou hast pared thy wit o' both sides and left nothing i' the middle. Here comes one o' the parings.

Enter GONERIL

LEAR. How now, daughter! what makes that frontlet on? Methinks you are too much of late i' the frown. 189

FOOL. Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need to care for her frowning; now thou art an O with-

173-176 *Then they . . . among*] A similar stanza ending:

“Some men for sudden joy gan weep
 But I for sorrow sing,”

is sung in Thomas Heywood's *Rape of Lucrece*, 1608. Heywood probably imitated Shakespeare here.

175 *play bo-peep*] play childish games.

187 *frontlet*] properly a tight band worn on women's foreheads, but here an incipient frown. Cf. *Zepheria* (1594), a collection of sonnets, xxvii, 14: “And veil thy face with frowns as with a frontlet.”

191-192 *an O without a figure*] a cipher.

out a figure: I am better than thou art now; I am a fool, thou art nothing. [*To Gon.*] Yes, forsooth, I will hold my tongue; so your face bids me, though you say nothing.

Mum, mum:

He that keeps nor crust nor crumb,
Weary of all, shall want some.

[*Pointing to Lear*] That's a shealed peascod.

GON. Not only, sir, this your all-licensed fool,
But other of your insolent retinue 200
Do hourly carp and quarrel, breaking forth
In rank and not to be endured riots. Sir,
I had thought, by making this well known unto you,
To have found a safe redress; but now grow fearful,
By what yourself too late have spoke and done,
That you protect this course and put it on
By your allowance; which if you should, the fault
Would not 'scape censure, nor the redresses sleep,
Which, in the tender of a wholesome weal,
Might in their working do you that offence 210

197 *Weary of all*] Rejecting from ennui all sustenance.

198 *a shealed peascod*] an empty husk, or pod without the peas; "shealed" is the old spelling of "shelled."

206-207 *put it on . . . allowance*] prompt or encourage it by your approval.

207-212 *which if you should . . . proceeding*] The construction is confused. The lines mean: Encouragement of this order on your part is a fault inviting censure, nor will needful remedial measures be spared; such measures, undertaken for the due care and protection of a healthy court or state, might in their operation do you an injury, which injury it would in other circumstances be reprehensible to inflict on you, but will in the necessities of the case be reckoned a prudent or discreet procedure.

Which else were shame, that then necessity
Will call discreet proceeding.

FOOL. For, you know, nuncle,

The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,
That it had it head bit off by it young.

So out went the candle, and we were left darkling.

LEAR. Are you our daughter?

GON. Come, sir,

I would you would make use of that good wisdom
Whereof I know you are fraught, and put away 220
These dispositions that of late transform you
From what you rightly are.

FOOL. May not an ass know when the cart draws the
horse? Whoop, Jug! I love thee.

LEAR. Doth any here know me? This is not Lear:
Doth Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes?
Either his notion weakens, his discernings
Are lethargied — Ha! waking? 't is not so.
Who is it that can tell me who I am?

215 *it head . . . it young*] in both cases "it" is the old form of "its."
The lines refer to the cuckoo's habit of laying her eggs in the spar-
row's nest. The sparrow is wont to hatch and nurture the cuckoo's
chicks, though they when they grow up often kill the bird which has
cherished them.

216 *darkling*] in the dark. The line is probably a colloquial catch-phrase.

221 *dispositions*] humours, caprices. Cf. line 292, *infra*.

224 *Whoop, Jug! I love thee*] Possibly the burden of an old song. "Jug"
was the pet name for Joan.

227 *notion . . . discernings*] mind . . . understanding.
weakens] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *weakness*.

FOOL. Lear's shadow. 230

LEAR. I would learn that; for, by the marks of sovereignty, knowledge and reason, I should be false persuaded I had daughters.

FOOL. Which they will make an obedient father.

LEAR. Your name, fair gentlewoman?

GON. This admiration, sir, is much o' the savour
Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you
To understand my purposes aright:
As you are old and reverend, you should be wise.
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires; 240
Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd and bold,
That this our court, infected with their manners,
Shows like a riotous inn: epicurism and lust
Make it more like a tavern or a brothel
Than a graced palace. The shame itself doth speak
For instant remedy: be then desired

231-234 *I would learn . . . father*] These lines are only found in the Quartos. Their genuineness has been disputed. "Marks of sovereignty . . . daughters" would seem to mean evidence offered by "supreme mental power or faculty would delude me into the belief that I was the father of daughters." Lear ignores the Fool's interruption "Lear's shadow," line 230, and the Fool retaliates by ignoring Lear's interpolated sentences, and by continuing his comment in line 234, "Which . . . father."

236 *This admiration*] This expression of astonishment.

239 *you should*] Thus the Second and Third Quartos. Other early editions omit *you*. Steevens would omit *you should*, and thus improve the metre.

241 *debosh'd*] an old spelling of "debauched."

243 *epicurism*] gluttony. Cf. *Macb.*, V, iii, 8: "the English *epicures*."

245 *graced*] dignified, decorous.

By her that else will take the thing she begs
 A little to disquantity your train,
 And the remainder that shall still depend,
 To be such men as may besort your age, 250
 Which know themselves and you.

LEAR. Darkness and devils!
 Saddle my horses; call my train together.
 Degenerate bastard! I'll not trouble thee:
 Yet have I left a daughter.

GON. You strike my people, and your disorder'd
 rabble
 Make servants of their betters.

Enter ALBANY

LEAR. Woe, that too late repents, — [To Alb.] O,
 sir, are you come?
 Is it your will? Speak, sir. Prepare my horses.
 Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
 More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child 260
 Than the sea-monster!

ALB. Pray, sir, be patient.

LEAR. [To Gon.] Detested kite! thou liest.
 My train are men of choice and rarest parts,
 That all particulars of duty know,
 And in the most exact regard support

248 *disquantity*] diminish the quantity of. Cf. line 283, *infra*, "dis-natured."

249 *still depend*] still be your dependants, still continue in your service. Cf. *Troil. and Cress.*, III, i, 5: "I do *depend upon* (*i. e.*, serve) the Lord."

261 *the sea-monster*] a vague reference to the sea-monster described in Ovid's *Metam.*, xi, 199, *seq.*, to which reference is made in *Merch. of Ven.*, III, ii, 55-57, and note.

The worships of their name. O most small fault,
 How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!
 That, like an engine, wrench'd my frame of nature
 From the fix'd place, drew from my heart all love
 And added to the gall. O Lear, Lear, Lear! 270
 Beat at this gate, that let thy folly in [*Striking his head.*
 And thy dear judgement out! Go, go, my people.
 ALB. My lord, I am guiltless, as I am ignorant
 Of what hath moved you.

LEAR. It may be so, my lord.
 Hear, nature, hear; dear goddess, hear!
 Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend
 To make this creature fruitful:
 Into her womb convey sterility:
 Dry up in her the organs of increase,
 And from her derogate body never spring 280
 A babe to honour her! If she must teem,
 Create her child of spleen, that it may live
 And be a thwart disnatured torment to her.
 Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth;
 With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks;
 Turn all her mother's pains and benefits

266 *The worships*] The honourable repute. Such a plural is often met with.

268 *like an engine*] like the rack.

280 *derogate*] degenerate or degraded.

283 *thwart disnatured*] perverse, lacking natural affection or instinct.

285 *cadent*] falling; a rare Latinism. Thus the Folios; the Quartos read hardly intelligibly *accient* or *accient*.

286 *mother's pains and benefits*] maternal anxieties and kind offices rendered by mothers to children.

To laughter and contempt; that she may feel
 How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
 To have a thankless child! Away, away! [Exit.

ALB. Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this? 290

GON. Never afflict yourself to know the cause,
 But let his disposition have that scope
 That dotage gives it.

Re-enter LEAR

LEAR. What, fifty of my followers at a clap!
 Within a fortnight!

ALB. What's the matter, sir?

LEAR. I'll tell thee. *[To Gon.]* Life and death!
 am ashamed

That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus;
 That these hot tears, which break from me perforce,
 Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs upon
 thee!

The untented woundings of a father's curse 300
 Pierce every sense about thee! Old fond eyes,
 Beweep this cause again, I'll pluck ye out
 And cast you with the waters that you lose
 To temper clay. Yea, is it come to this?
 Let it be so: yet have I left a daughter,

292 *disposition*] caprice. Cf. line 221, *supra*.

294 *at a clap*] at a stroke.

300 *untented*] not to be healed, incapable of yielding to the surgeon's curative "tent" or probe.

305 *Let . . . daughter*] The Quartos omit *Let it be so*: which is only in the Folios. *Yet have I left a daughter* is the Quarto reading for the Folio *I have another daughter*.

Who, I am sure, is kind and comfortable:
 When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails
 She 'll flay thy wolvisch visage. Thou shalt find
 That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think
 I have cast off for ever: thou shalt, I warrant thee. 310

[*Exeunt Lear, Kent, and Attendants.*]

GON. Do you mark that, my lord?

ALB. I cannot be so partial, Goneril,
 To the great love I bear you, —

GON. Pray you, content. What, Oswald, ho!
 [*To the Fool*] You, sir, more knave than fool, after your
 master.

FOOL. Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear, tarry; take the fool
 with thee.

A fox, when one has caught her,
 And such a daughter,
 Should sure to the slaughter, 320
 If my cap would buy a halter:
 So the fool follows after. [*Exit.*]

GON. This man hath had good counsel: a hundred
 knights!
 'T is politic and safe to let him keep
 At point a hundred knights: yes, that on every dream,

306 *comfortable*] comforting, giving comfort or sympathy.

322 *after*] The Elizabethans pronounced this word much like "slaughter"
 and "halter," words with which it rhymes here.

323-334 *This . . . unfitness, —*] These lines are omitted from the
 Quartos.

325 *At point*] Equipped.

Each buzz, each fancy, each complaint, dislike,
 He may enguard his dotage with their powers
 And hold our lives in mercy. Oswald, I say!

ALB. Well, you may fear too far.

GON. Safer than trust too far:
 Let me still take away the harms I fear, 330
 Not fear still to be taken: I know his heart.
 What he hath utter'd I have writ my sister:
 If she sustain him and his hundred knights,
 When I have show'd the unfitness, —

Re-enter OSWALD

How now, Oswald!
 What, have you writ that letter to my sister?

Osw. Yes, madam.

GON. Take you some company, and away to horse:
 Inform her full of my particular fear,
 And thereto add such reasons of your own
 As may compact it more. Get you gone; 340
 And hasten your return. [*Exit Oswald.*] No, no, my lord,
 This milky gentleness and course of yours
 Though I condemn not, yet, under pardon,
 You are much more attask'd for want of wisdom
 Than praised for harmful mildness.

326 *buzz*] vague rumour, undertone of gossip.

331 *Not fear . . . taken*] Nor constantly fear to be overtaken by harms.

340 *compact it more*] strengthen it.

344 *attask'd*] (to be) taken to task, reproved. Thus some copies of the First Quarto. The word is found nowhere else. Other copies of the First Quarto with the Second and Third Quartos read *alapt*. The

ALB. How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell:
Striving to better, oft we mar what's well.

GON. Nay, then —

ALB. Well, well; the event.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V — COURT BEFORE THE SAME

Enter LEAR, KENT, and Fool

LEAR. Go you before to ^{Cornwall} Gloucester with these letters.
Acquaint my daughter no further with any thing you
know than comes from her demand out of the letter. If
your diligence be not speedy, I shall be there afore you.

KENT. I will not sleep, my lord, till I have delivered
your letter. [*Exit.*]

FOOL. If a man's brains were in 's heels, were't not
in danger of kibes?

LEAR. Ay, boy.

FOOL. Then, I prithee, be merry; thy wit shall ne'er 10
go slipshod.

Folios have *at task*. The strange word *alapt* (*i. e.*, slap or strike) is found in the form "alapat," in Melton's *Sixfold Politician* (1609, page 185): "not with a wand to *alapat* and strike them."

349 *the event*] (we'll wait to see) how it turns out.

SCENE V, 4 *there*] at Gloucester; see line 1. The Duke of Cornwall and Lear's daughter Regan are supposed to reside at Gloucester, and the Earl of Gloucester to have in the neighbourhood of the city, a castle, where the next two scenes take place.

8 *kibes*] chilblains.

10-11 *thy wit . . . slipshod*] "slipshod" means "in slippers," the natural footgear for sore heels. The Fool means that Lear has no brains, and

LEAR. Ha, ha, ha!

FOOL. Shalt see thy other daughter will use thee kindly; for though she's as like this as a crab's like an apple, yet I can tell what I can tell.

LEAR. Why, what canst thou tell, my boy?

FOOL. She will taste as like this as a crab does to a crab. Thou canst tell why one's nose stands i' the middle on 's face?

LEAR. No.

20

FOOL. Why, to keep one's eyes of either side's nose, that what a man cannot smell out he may spy into.

LEAR. I did her wrong —

FOOL. Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?

LEAR. No.

FOOL. Nor I neither; but I can tell why a snail has a house.

LEAR. Why?

FOOL. Why, to put's head in; not to give it away to his daughters, and leave his horns without a case. 30

LEAR. I will forget my nature. — So kind a father!
— Be my horses ready?

FOOL. Thy asses are gone about 'em. The reason why the seven stars are no more than seven is a pretty reason.

in virtue of his quibbling association of brains with sore heels, he denies that Lear will have any need of invalid shoes.

14 *crab*] The "crabapple," commonly called "crab," had a very sour taste.

23 *I did her wrong*] Lear refers to his treatment of Cordelia.

34 *the seven stars*] the Pleiades. Cf. *1 Hen. IV*, I, ii, 13: "the moon and the seven stars."

LEAR. Because they are not eight?

FOOL. Yes, indeed: thou wouldst make a good fool.

LEAR. To take 't again perforce! Monster ingratitude!

FOOL. If thou wert my fool, nuncle, I'd have thee beaten for being old before thy time.

LEAR. How's that?

40

FOOL. Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise.

LEAR. O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!

Keep me in temper: I would not be mad!

Enter Gentleman

How now! are the horses ready?

GENT. Ready, my lord.

LEAR. Come, boy.

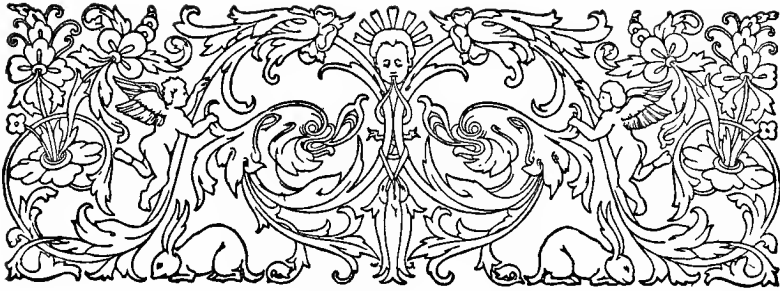
FOOL. She that's a maid now and laughs at my departure

Shall not be a maid long, unless things be cut shorter.

[Exeunt.]

37 *To take 't again perforce]* No doubt Lear is meditating a forcible resumption of his royal power.

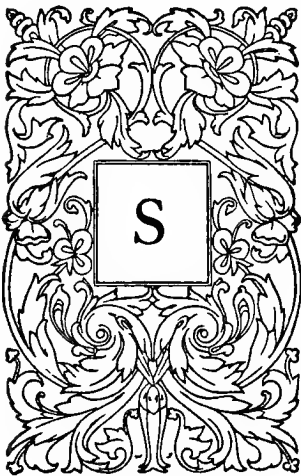
48-49 *She that's . . . cut shorter]* The Quartos make Lear go out before the fool speaks this couplet, which many critics regard as an actor's interpolation.



ACT SECOND — SCENE I
THE EARL OF GLOUCESTER'S CASTLE

Enter EDMUND and CURAN, meeting

EDMUND



HAVE THEE, CURAN.

CUR. And you, sir. I have been with your father, and given him notice that the Duke of Cornwall and Regan his duchess will be here with him this night.

EDM. How comes that?

CUR. Nay, I know not. You have heard of the news abroad, I mean the whispered ones, for they are yet but ear-kissing arguments?

EDM. Not I: pray you, what are they?

CUR. Have you heard of no likely wars toward, 'twixt 10 the Dukes of Cornwall and Albany?

⁸ *ear-kissing arguments*] expressions that lightly touch the ear, topics merely spoken of in an undertone. Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *care-bussing*, "bussing" being an archaic word for "kissing."

EDM. Not a word.

CUR. You may do then in time. Fare you well, sir.
[Exit.]

EDM. The duke be here to-night? The better! best!
This weaves itself perforce into my business.
My father hath set guard to take my brother;
And I have one thing, of a queasy question,
Which I must act: briefness and fortune, work!
Brother, a word; descend: brother, I say!

Enter EDGAR

My father watches: O sir, fly this place; 20
Intelligence is given where you are hid;
You have now the good advantage of the night:
Have you not spoken 'gainst the Duke of Cornwall?
He's coming hither, now, i' the night, i' the haste,
And Regan with him: have you nothing said
Upon his party 'gainst the Duke of Albany?
Advise yourself.

EDG. I am sure on't, not a word.

EDM. I hear my father coming: pardon me:
In cunning I must draw my sword upon you:
Draw: seem to defend yourself: now quit you well. 30

10 *toward*] imminent.

17 *of a queasy question*] of a delicate or ticklish character.

26 *Upon his party*] On the Duke of Cornwall's side, in that duke's support. Edmund is mystifying Edgar by putting him a question quite contradicting his first query: "Have you not spoken 'gainst the Duke of Cornwall?" (line 23, *supra*).

27 *Advise yourself*] Recollect.

29 *In cunning*] By way of pretence.

Yield: come before my father. Light, ho, here!
Fly, brother. Torches, torches! So farewell.

[*Exit Edgar.*]

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion

[*Wounds his arm.*]

Of my more fierce endeavour: I have seen drunkards
Do more than this in sport. Father, father!
Stop, stop! No help?

Enter GLOUCESTER, and Servants with torches

GLOU. Now, Edmund, where's the villain?

EDM. Here stood he in the dark, his sharp sword
out,

Mumbling of wicked charms, conjuring the moon
To stand's auspicious mistress.

GLOU. But where is he? 40

EDM. Look, sir, I bleed.

GLOU. Where is the villain, Edmund?

EDM. Fled this way, sir. When by no means he
could —

GLOU. Pursue him, ho! — Go after. [*Exeunt some
Servants.*] “By no means” what?

EDM. Persuade me to the murder of your lordship;
But that I told him the revenging gods

33 *beget opinion*] create a notion.

34–35 *I have seen . . . sport*] Reference is often made by the dramatists to the practice of young gallants when inflamed with drink stabbing themselves and drinking all manner of filth, by way of attesting their devotion to their mistress.

'Gainst parricides did all their thunders bend,
 Spoke with how manifold and strong a bond
 The child was bound to the father; sir, in fine,
 Seeing how loathly opposite I stood
 To his unnatural purpose, in fell motion 50
 With his prepared sword he charges home
 My unprovided body, lanced mine arm:
 But when he saw my best alarum'd spirits
 Bold in the quarrel's right, roused to the encounter,
 Or whether gasted by the noise I made,
 Full suddenly he fled.

GLOU. Let him fly far:
 Not in this land shall he remain uncaught;
 And found — dispatch. The noble duke my master,
 My worthy arch and patron, comes to-night:
 By his authority I will proclaim it, 60
 That he which finds him shall deserve our thanks,
 Bringing the murderous caitiff to the stake;
 He that conceals him, death.

EDM. When I dissuaded him from his intent

49 *how loathly opposite I stood*] with what disgust I declared my
 opposition.

50 *motion*] a technical term in fencing for making an attack.

52 *lanced*] The Quartos have *lancht* or *launcht* which is an old spelling of
 "lanced." The Folios have *latch'd*.

53 *my best alarum'd spirits*] my finest courage roused to action.

55 *gasted by*] frightened by, aghast at. Cf. *Othello*, V, i, 106: "Do you per-
 ceive the *gastness* of her eye?"

58 *And found — dispatch*] An elliptical expression for "and when he is
found there shall be no delay; he shall be killed outright." Cf. line
 63, *infra*: "He that conceals him, death."

59 *arch*] chief.

And found him pight to do it, with curst speech
 I threaten'd to discover him: he replied,
 "Thou unpossessing bastard! dost thou think,
 If I would stand against thee, could the reposeure
 Of any trust, virtue, or worth, in thee
 Make thy words faith'd? No: what I should deny — 70
 As this I would; ay, though thou didst produce
 My very character — I'd turn it all
 To thy suggestion, plot, and damned practice:
 And thou must make a dullard of the world,
 If they not thought the profits of my death
 Were very pregnant and potential spurs
 To make thee seek it."

GLOU. Strong and fasten'd villain!
 Would he deny his letter? I never got him.

[*Tucket within.*]

Hark, the duke's trumpets! I know not why he comes.
 All ports I'll bar; the villain shall not 'scape; 80

65 *pight . . . curst*] settled or pledged . . . vehement.

67 *unpossessing*] without the right of inheriting.

68 *reposure*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *reposal* or *reposal*.

69 *virtue, or worth*] These words are co-ordinate with "reposure of any trust."

70 *faith'd*] believed.

72 *character*] handwriting.

73 *suggestion . . . practice*] prompting or instigation . . . plotting or intrigue.

76 *pregnant*] obvious.

77 *Strong and fasten'd*] Resolute and determined.

78 *I never got him*] I never begot him; cf. III, iv, 142, *infra*, where "gets" is similarly used for "begets." Thus the Quartos. The Folios substitute less intelligibly *said he*?

The duke must grant me that: besides, his picture
 I will send far and near, that all the kingdom
 May have due note of him; and of my land,
 Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means
 To make thee capable.

Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, *and* Attendants

CORN. How now, my noble friend! since I came hither,
 Which I can call but now, I have heard strange news.

REG. If it be true, all vengeance comes too short
 Which can pursue the offender. How dost, my lord?

GLOU. O, madam, my old heart is crack'd, is crack'd! 90

REG. What, did my father's godson seek your life?
 He whom my father named? your Edgar?

GLOU. O, lady, lady, shame would have it hid!

REG. Was he not companion with the riotous knights
 That tend upon my father?

GLOU. I know not, madam: 't is too bad, too bad.

EDM. Yes, madam, he was of that consort.

REG. No marvel then, though he were ill affected:
 'T is they have put him on the old man's death,
 To have the waste and spoil of his revenues. 100
 I have this present evening from my sister
 Been well inform'd of them, and with such cautions

84 *natural*] used in the double sense of "illegitimate" and "possessed of good natural instincts."

85 *capable*] *sc.* of the succession.

97 *consort*] company, fellowship.

99 *put him on*] instigate him to attempt.

100 *the waste and spoil*] Thus some copies of the First Quarto. The Folios read *th' expence and wast.*

That if they come to sojourn at my house,
I'll not be there.

CORN. Nor I, assure thee, Regan.
Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father
A child-like office.

EDM. 'T was my duty, sir.

GLOU. He did bewray his practice, and received
This hurt you see, striving to apprehend him.

CORN. Is he pursued?

GLOU. Ay, my good lord.

CORN. If he be taken, he shall never more 110
Be fear'd of doing harm: make your own purpose,
How in my strength you please. For you, Edmund,
Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant
So much commend itself, you shall be ours:
Natures of such deep trust we shall much need:
You we first seize on.

EDM. I shall serve you, sir,
Truly, however else.

GLOU. For him I thank your grace.

CORN. You know not why we came to visit you, —

REG. Thus out of season, threading dark-eyed night:
Occasions, noble Gloucester, of some poise, 120

106 *child-like*] filial.

107 *bewray his practice*] betray his plot. For "practice" cf. line 73, *supra*.

111–112 *make your own . . . please*] make your own arrangements, using
as you will my power to serve you.

119 *threading*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *threatning*. Cf. *Cor.*,

III, i, 124: "They would not *thread* (*i. e.*, pass through) the gates."

The image is from threading a needle.

120 *poise*] weight, moment.

Wherein we must have use of your advice:
 Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister,
 Of differences, which I least thought it fit
 To answer from our home; the several messengers
 From hence attend dispatch. Our good old friend,
 Lay comforts to your bosom, and bestow
 Your needful counsel to our business,
 Which craves the instant use.

GLOU. I serve you, madam:
 Your graces are right welcome. [*Flourish. Exeunt.*]

SCENE II—BEFORE GLOUCESTER'S CASTLE

Enter KENT and OSWALD, severally

OSW. Good dawning to thee, friend: art of this
 house?

KENT. Ay.

OSW. Where may we set our horses?

KENT. I' the mire.

OSW. Prithee, if thou lovest me, tell me.

KENT. I love thee not.

123 *least*] The Cambridge editors substitute *least* for *lest*, which is the reading of some copies of the First Quarto. *Best* is the reading of other copies of the First Quarto and of all other early editions. *Best* makes very good sense. "From our home" in line 124 may well mean "away from home," "in absence from home."

124 *from our home*] For *home* some copies of the First Quarto read *hand*.

125 *attend dispatch*] wait to be dispatched.

1 *dawning*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *even* (*i. e.*, evening). The affected phrase implies the time about daybreak.

OSW. Why then I care not for thee.

KENT. If I had thee in Lipsbury pinfeld, I would make thee care for me.

OSW. Why dost thou use me thus? I know thee not. 10

KENT. Fellow, I know thee.

OSW. What dost thou know me for?

KENT. A knave; a rascal; an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy, worsted-stocking knave; a lily-livered action-taking knave; a whoreson, glass-gazing, superserviceable, finical rogue; one-trunk-inheriting slave; one

8 *Lipsbury pinfeld*] "Pinfeld" is a synonym for "pound," a public enclosure for the confinement of stray cattle. Lipsbury is unexplained. It is perhaps a coined word sarcastically meaning "the lips." Kent might well threaten to get Oswald between his teeth.

14 *three-suited*] obviously a term of reproach, as in Jonson's *Silent Woman*, iv, 5, 10-11: "Thou wert a pitiful poor fellow, . . . and had nothing but *three suits* of apparel." Below, III, iv, 129, Edgar speaks rather contradictorily of "three suits to his back" as a sign of comparative prosperity. But Kent means here that a beggarly servitor like Oswald gives himself the airs of a man with a rich wardrobe.

14-15 *hundred-pound*] another term of reproach. Cf. Middleton's *Phœnix*, IV, iii, 55-56: "How's this? am I used like a *hundred-pound gentleman*?"

15 *worsted-stocking*] Poor people wore worsted stockings, while the stockings of rich people were invariably of silk.

16 *action-taking knave*] one who resorts to legal action when assaulted instead of challenging an assailant to fight.

glass-gazing] surveying his person in a looking-glass.

superserviceable] one above his duties. Cf. IV, vi, 254, *infra*: "a *serviceable* villain."

17 *one-trunk-inheriting*] possessing a stock of clothes which would all go into a single trunk.

that wouldst be a bawd in way of good service, and art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pandar, and the son and heir of a mongrel bitch: one ²⁰ whom I will beat into clamorous whining, if thou deniest the least syllable of thy addition.

Osw. Why, what a monstrous fellow art thou, thus to rail on one that is neither known of thee nor knows thee!

KENT. What a brazen-faced varlet art thou, to deny thou knowest me! Is it two days ago since I tripped up thy heels and beat thee before the king? Draw, you rogue: for, though it be night, yet the moon shines; I'll make a sop o' the moonshine of you: draw, you whore-son cullionly barber-monger, draw. [*Drawing his sword.*]³⁰

Osw. Away! I have nothing to do with thee.

KENT. Draw, you rascal: you come with letters against the king, and take vanity the puppet's part against the royalty of her father: draw, you rogue, or I'll so carbonado your shanks: draw, you rascal; come your ways.

Osw. Help, ho! murder! help!

²² *addition*] title.

²⁸⁻²⁹ *I'll make a sop o' the moonshine of you*] I'll beat you to a mummy by moonlight. There is a quibbling reference to a popular dish known as "eggs in moonshine." "A sop" literally meant a piece of toast soaked in wine or ale.

³⁰ *cullionly barber-monger*] rascally frequenter of barbers' shops, where he was forever getting his hair and beard trimmed.

³³ *vanity the puppet's part*] Lady Vanity was a conventional character in the old moralities, and was usually dressed as a woman.

³⁵ *carbonado*] slash; a culinary term.

KENT. Strike, you slave; stand, rogue; stand, you neat slave, strike. [Beating him.]

Osw. Help, ho! murder! murder!

Enter EDMUND, with his rapier drawn, CORNWALL, REGAN, GLOUCESTER, and Servants

EDM. How now! What's the matter? [Parting them. 40]

KENT. With you, goodman boy, an you please: come, I'll flesh you; come on, young master.

GLOU. Weapons! arms! What's the matter here?

CORN. Keep peace, upon your lives; He dies that strikes again. What is the matter?

REG. The messengers from our sister and the king.

CORN. What is your difference? speak.

OSW. I am scarce in breath, my lord.

KENT. No marvel, you have so bestirred your valour. You cowardly rascal, nature disclaims in thee: a tailor 50 made thee.

37-38 *you neat slave*] you unmitigated scoundrel. Cf. Jonson's *Poetaster*, III, v, 15, "neat wine" and *ibid.*, IV, iii, 20, "my neat scoundrel." There may be in "neat" an implicit allusion to the "neatness," *i. e.*, spruceness, of Oswald's attire.

40-41 *What's the matter? . . . goodman boy*] In the Folios the word *matter?* is followed by an italicised word *Part* which is no doubt an elliptical indication of the accepted stage direction. Kent attaches to the word "matter" the special sense of "quarrel." *goodman*] a contemptuous mode of address, equivalent to "master."

42 *flesh you*] initiate you in fight. Cf. *Hen. V*, II, iv, 50, and line 118, *infra*.

50 *disclaims in thee*] disowns thee; in Elizabethan English an enclitic "in" commonly follows "disclaim."

CORN. Thou art a strange fellow: a tailor make a man?

KENT. Ay, a tailor, sir: a stone-cutter or a painter could not have made him so ill, though he had been but two hours at the trade.

CORN. Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

OSW. This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spared at suit of his gray beard, —

KENT. Thou whoreson zed! thou unnecessary letter! My lord, if you will give me leave, I will tread this unbolted villain into mortar, and daub the walls of a jakes with him. Spare my gray beard, you wagtail?

CORN. Peace, sirrah!

You beastly knave, know you no reverence?

KENT. Yes, sir; but anger hath a privilege.

CORN. Why art thou angry?

KENT. That such a slave as this should wear a sword,
Who wears no honesty. Such smiling rogues as these,
Like rats, oft bite the holy cords a-twain
Which are too intrinse to unloose; smooth every passion
That in the natures of their lords rebel;
Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods;

53 *stone-cutter*] sculptor.

59 *zed . . . letter*] Cf. Ben Jonson's *English Grammar*: "Zed is a letter often heard among us, but seldom seen."

60-61 *unbolted*] unsifted, crude, coarse. Cf. *Hen. V*, II, ii, 137: "finely bolted."

65 *anger hath a privilege*] Cf. *K. John*, IV, iii, 32: "*impatience* hath his privilege."

69 *holy cords*] bonds of filial affection.

70 *intrinse*] tightly knotted; a fuller form is "intrinsic"; cf. *Ant. and Cleop.*, V, ii, 302: "this knot *intrinsicate*," and note.

Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks
 With every gale and vary of their masters,
 Knowing nought, like dogs, but following.
 A plague upon your epileptic visage!
 Smile you my speeches, as I were a fool?
 Goose, if I had you upon Sarum plain,
 I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot.

CORN. What, art thou mad, old fellow? 80

GLOU. How fell you out? say that.

KENT. No contraries hold more antipathy
 Than I and such a knave.

CORN. Why dost thou call him knave? What is his
 fault?

KENT. His countenance likes me not.

73 *Renege*] Deny, renounce.

halcyon] the kingfisher. There was a popular belief that if the bird was suspended in the air by a cord round its neck, its bill would always point to the quarter from which the wind blew. Cf. Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, I, i, 38-39: "But now how stands the wind? Into what corner peers my *halcyon's bill*?"

76 *epileptic*] distorted by grinning.

77 *Smile you?*] Do you smile at? The verb is rarely used actively. The preposition is similarly omitted, I, i, 160, *supra*: "Thou swear'st thy gods." All the early editions save the Fourth Folio read *smoile* or *smoyle*, an archaic form of "smile."

78 *Sarum*] Salisbury.

79 *Camelot*] the name of the place where in the Arthurian romances King Arthur kept his court and sat in judgment on unworthy knights. Camelot is variously identified with Winchester and South Cadbury, a village in Somerset. The latter is doubtfully said to have been famous for its wealth of geese. So literal an association is not necessary to the interpretation of the passage.

CORN. No more perchance does mine, nor his, nor hers.

KENT. Sir, 't is my occupation to be plain :
I have seen better faces in my time
Than stands on any shoulder that I see
Before me at this instant.

CORN. This is some fellow, 90
Who, having been praised for bluntness, doth affect
A saucy roughness, and constrains the garb
Quite from his nature: he cannot flatter, he, —
An honest mind and plain, — he must speak truth
An they will take it, so; if not, he's plain.
These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness
Harbour more craft and more corrupter ends
Than twenty silly ducking observants
That stretch their duties nicely.

KENT. Sir, in good faith, in sincere verity, 100
Under the allowance of your great aspect,
Whose influence, like the wreath of radiant fire
On flickering Phœbus' front, —

CORN. What mean'st by this?

KENT. To go out of my dialect, which you discom-

92-93 *constrains . . . nature*] forces his outward manner to something different from his natural disposition; his frankness conceals a deceitful nature.

96 *These kind*] See note on *Tw. Night*, I, v, 83: "*These set kind of fools.*"

98-99 *silly ducking observants . . . nicely*] stupidly obsequious attendants, who perform their duties to the extreme limit of punctiliousness.

101-102 *aspect . . . influence*] technical terms of astrology; they well suit the pompously stilted style of speech which Kent here ironically affects.

mend so much. I know, sir, I am no flatterer: he that beguiled you in a plain accent was a plain knave; which, for my part, I will not be, though I should win your displeasure to entreat me to 't.

CORN. What was the offence you gave him?

Osw. I never gave him any:

110

It pleased the king his master very late
To strike at me, upon his misconstruction;
When he, conjunct, and flattering his displeasure,
Tripp'd me behind; being down, insulted, rail'd,
And put upon him such a deal of man,
That worthied him, got praises of the king
For him attempting who was self-subdued,
And in the fleshment of this dread exploit
Drew on me here again.

KENT. None of these rogues and cowards
But Ajax is their fool.

107-108 *I will not be . . . me to't*] Kent clumsily implies that he would decline to be, like Oswald, "a plain (or downright) knave," though he should win Cornwall's disfavour (which he values more than his favour) by yielding to his request to assume that character.

113 *conjunct*] in concert or alliance (with Lear). This reading of the Quartos is replaced in the Folios by *compact*, which has much the same meaning.

114-117 *being down . . . self-subdued*] when I was down he insulted and railed at me, and made himself out to be such a brave man that he won much repute, obtained praises of the king for attacking one who was able to control his anger.

118 *the fleshment*] the initial elation. Cf. line 42, *supra*.

120 *Ajax*] a synonym for a brave, blunt man, whom designing villains always make their butt or get the better of. Doubtless Shakespeare

CORN. Fetch forth the stocks! 120
 You stubborn ancient knave, you reverend braggart,
 We'll teach you —

KENT. Sir, I am too old to learn:
 Call not your stocks for me: I serve the king,
 On whose employment I was sent to you:
 You shall do small respect, show too bold malice
 Against the grace and person of my master,
 Stocking his messenger.

CORN. Fetch forth the stocks! As I have life and
 honour,
 There shall he sit till noon.

REG. Till noon! till night, my lord, and all night too.

KENT. Why, madam, if I were your father's dog, 131
 You should not use me so.

REG. Sir, being his knave, I will.

CORN. This is a fellow of the self-same colour
 Our sister speaks of. Come, bring away the stocks!
[Stocks brought out.]

GLOU. Let me beseech your grace not to do so:
 His fault is much, and the good king his master
 Will check him for 't: your purposed low correction
 Is such as basest and contemned'st wretches
 For pilferings and most common trespasses
 Are punish'd with: the king must take it ill, 140

had in mind crafty Ulysses' contemptuous usage of Ajax in Ovid's
Metamorphoses, Bk. XIII.

136-140 *His fault . . . Are punish'd with*] This passage is omitted from
 the Folios.

140 *the king*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *The King his Master*,
needs.

That he, so slightly valued in his messenger,
Should have him thus restrain'd.

CORN. I'll answer that.

REG. My sister may receive it much more worse,
To have her gentleman abused, assaulted,
For following her affairs. Put in his legs.

Come, my good lord, away. *[Kent is put in the stocks.]*

[Exeunt all but Gloucester and Kent.]

GLOU. I am sorry for thee, friend; 't is the duke's
pleasure,
Whose disposition, all the world well knows,
Will not be rubb'd nor stopp'd: I'll entreat for
thee.

KENT. Pray, do not, sir: I have watch'd and travell'd
hard; 150
Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle.
A good man's fortune may grow out at heels:
Give you good morrow!

GLOU. The duke's to blame in this; 't will be ill
taken. *[Exit.]*

KENT. Good king, that must approve the common
saw,
Thou out of heaven's benediction comest
To the warm sun!

145 *For . . . legs*] This line is omitted from the Folios.

149 *rubb'd*] impeded, hindered. "Rub" technically meant an obstacle
in the bowling alley.

155-157 *must approve . . . sun*] must make good the common proverb,
which ordinarily runs "out of God's blessing into the warm sun."
The phrase is usually applied to a passage "from better to worse,"

Approach, thou beacon to this under globe,
 That by thy comfortable beams I may
 Peruse this letter! Nothing almost sees miracles 160
 But misery: I know 't is from Cordelia,
 Who hath most fortunately been inform'd
 Of my obscured course; and shall find time
 From this enormous state, seeking to give
 Losses their remedies. All weary and o'er-watch'd,
 Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold
 This shameful lodging.
 Fortune, good night: smile once more; turn thy wheel!
 [Sleeps.]

to the exchange of a reasonably safe haven for a scene of probable danger. The origin of the proverb, which is often cited by Elizabethan authors, is obscure. There is perhaps a reference to the perils that awaited threatened persons who took sanctuary in churches on coming out into the open air.

160-161 *Nothing . . . misery*] It is almost only by the unfortunate that miracles are looked for or seen; prosperous people stand in no need of them.

163-165 *and shall find time . . . remedies*] This is the reading of all the old editions; the punctuation is substantially that of the Folios. Kent is continuing in a disjointed way his reference to Cordelia, who, he says, will (or, is certain to) find opportunity out of this anomalous condition of things for an endeavour to remedy these wrongs. The loose construction reflects Kent's drowsy condition. "Enormous" is found in the sense of "abnormal" or "anomalous" in *Two Noble Kinsmen*, V, i, 62: "O great corrector of *enormous* times."

166 *Take vantage*] Take advantage of your sleepiness.

SCENE III — A WOOD

Enter EDGAR

EDG. I heard myself proclaim'd;
 And by the happy hollow of a tree
 Escaped the hunt. No port is free; no place,
 That guard and most unusual vigilance
 Does not attend my taking. Whiles I may 'scape
 I will preserve myself: and am bethought
 To take the basest and most poorest shape
 That ever penury in contempt of man
 Brought near to beast: my face I'll grime with filth,
 Blanket my loins, elf all my hair in knots, 10
 And with presented nakedness out-face
 The winds and persecutions of the sky.
 The country gives me proof and precedent
 Of Bedlam beggars, who with roaring voices
 Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms
 Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;

2 *happy*] discovered by good luck.

3 *port*] place of exit.

4 *That guard*] Where watchful sentinel.

6 *am bethought*] have thought, have designed.

10 *elf . . . hair*] tangle all my hair; as elves were held to mat the hair of sluts. Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, I, iv, 90-91: "(Queen Mab) bakes the elflocks in foul, sluttish hairs."

14 *Bedlam beggars*] half-crazy beggars, strictly applied to mendicant patients discharged from Bethlehem or Bedlam hospital, but often used with a more general significance of pauper idiots. Cf. I, ii, 129-130, *supra*, and III, vii, 102, *infra*.

16 *wooden pricks*] skewers of wood.

And with this horrible object, from low farms,
 Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes and mills,
 Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,
 Enforce their charity. Poor Turlygod! poor Tom! ²⁰
 That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am. [*Exit.*]

SCENE IV — BEFORE GLOUCESTER'S CASTLE

KENT IN THE STOCKS

Enter LEAR, FOOL, and Gentleman

LEAR. 'T is strange that they should so depart from
 home,
 And not send back my messenger.

GENT. As I learn'd,
 The night before there was no purpose in them
 Of this remove.

KENT. Hail to thee, noble master!

LEAR. Ha!
 Makest thou this shame thy pastime?

KENT. No, my lord.

17 *object . . . low*] appearance . . . lowly.

18 *pelting*] paltry, contemptible.

19 *lunatic bans*] mad imprecations.

20 *Turlygod*] This fantastic appellation of a crazy beggar is unexplained. A strange fraternity of naked beggars, which infested the continent of Europe in the fourteenth century seems to have been known as Turlupins, of which Turlygod has been doubtfully interpreted as a corrupt form.

21 *Edgar I nothing am*] I am no longer likely to be mistaken for Edgar. I have rid myself of his likeness.

FOOL. Ha, ha! he wears cruel garters. Horses are tied by the heads, dogs and bears by the neck, monkeys by the loins, and men by the legs: when a man's over-lusty at legs, then he wears wooden nether-stocks. 10

LEAR. What's he that hath so much thy place mistook
To set thee here?

KENT. It is both he and she;
Your son and daughter.

LEAR. No.

KENT. Yes.

LEAR. No, I say.

KENT. I say, yea.

LEAR. No, no, they would not.

KENT. Yes, they have.

LEAR. By Jupiter, I swear, no. 20

KENT. By Juno, I swear, ay.

LEAR. They durst not do't;
They could not, would not do't; 't is worse than
murder,
To do upon respect such violent outrage:
Resolve me with all modest haste which way

7 *cruel*] a pun on the word in its ordinary use, and in the sense of worsted yarn, commonly spelt "crewel." The quip is often met with. Cf. Ben Jonson's *Alchemist*, I, i, 173-174: "Ere we contribute a new *crewel garter* To his most *worsted* worship."

10 *nether-stocks*] stockings or socks, as opposed to knee breeches, the upper-stocks.

23 *upon respect*] with deliberation.

24 *Resolve me . . . haste*] Inform me with all the speed that becomes a truthful statement.

Thou mightst deserve, or they impose, this usage,
Coming from us.

KENT. My lord, when at their home
I did commend your highness' letters to them,
Ere I was risen from the place that show'd
My duty kneeling, came there a reeking post,
Stew'd in his haste, half breathless, panting forth 30
From Goneril his mistress salutations;
Deliver'd letters, spite of intermission,
Which presently they read: on whose contents
They summon'd up their meiny, straight took horse;
Commanded me to follow and attend
The leisure of their answer; gave me cold looks:
And meeting here the other messenger,
Whose welcome, I perceived, had poison'd mine —
Being the very fellow that of late
Display'd so saucily against your highness — 40
Having more man than wit about me, drew:
He raised the house with loud and coward cries.
Your son and daughter found this trespass worth
The shame which here it suffers.

FOOL. Winter's not gone yet, if the wild geese fly
that way.

Fathers that wear rags
Do make their children blind;

32 *spite of intermission*] without any delay, at the cost of postponing audience of me.

34 *meiny*] retinue, household.

40 *Display'd so saucily*] Showed so saucy a demeanour.

41 *drew*] I drew my sword. The subject "I" is drawn from "I perceived" in line 38.

But fathers that bear bags
 Shall see their children kind.
 Fortune, that arrant whore,
 Ne'er turns the key to the poor.

50

But, for all this, thou shalt have as many dolours for thy daughters as thou canst tell in a year.

LEAR. O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!

Hysterica passio, down, thou climbing sorrow,
 Thy element's below! Where is this daughter?

KENT. With the earl, sir, here within.

LEAR. Follow me not; stay here. *[Exit.]*

GENT. Made you no more offence but what you speak of? 60

KENT. None.

How chance the king comes with so small a train?

FOOL. An thou hadst been set i' the stocks for that question, thou hadst well deserved it.

KENT. Why, fool?

FOOL. We'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach thee there's no labouring i' the winter. All that follow

52 *turns the key*] offers the key of her favours.

53 *dolours*] a pun on the word in the sense of the coin, and of grief. For the like quibble see *Tempest*, II, i, 18-19, and note.

for thy daughters] owing to, in regard to, thy daughters.

55 *this mother*] the popular name of an hysterical malady, the chief symptom of which was a choking sensation in the throat. The disease was technically known as "hysterica passio."

66-67 *We'll set thee . . . winter*] Cf. *Proverbs*, vi, 6-8: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest."

their noses are led by their eyes but blind men; and there's not a nose among twenty but can smell him that's stinking. Let go thy hold when a great wheel ⁷⁰ runs down a hill, lest it break thy neck with following it; but the great one that goes up the hill, let him draw thee after. When a wise man gives thee better counsel, give me mine again: I would have none but knaves follow it, since a fool gives it.

That sir which serves and seeks for gain,
 And follows but for form,
 Will pack when it begins to rain,
 And leave thee in the storm.
 But I will tarry; the fool will stay, 80
 And let the wise man fly:
 The knave turns fool that runs away;
 The fool no knave, perdy.

KENT. Where learned you this, fool?

FOOL. Not i' the stocks, fool.

Re-enter LEAR, with GLOUCESTER

LEAR. Deny to speak with me? They are sick? they
 are weary?

They have travell'd all the night? Mere fetches;
 The images of revolt and flying off.
 Fetch me a better answer.

GLOU. My dear lord,
 You know the fiery quality of the duke; 90

⁷⁶ *That sir*] That gentleman.

⁸⁷⁻⁸⁸ *fetches . . . flying off*] tricks or subterfuges; the tokens of rebellion and disaffection.

How unremoveable and fix'd he is
In his own course.

LEAR. Vengeance! plague! death! confusion!
Fiery? what quality? Why, Gloucester, Gloucester,
I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.

GLOU. Well, my good lord, I have inform'd them so.

LEAR. Inform'd them! Dost thou understand me,
man?

GLOU. Ay, my good lord.

LEAR. The king would speak with Cornwall; the dear
father

99

Would with his daughter speak, commands her service:
Are they inform'd of this? My breath and blood!
"Fiery"? "the fiery duke"? Tell the hot duke that —
No, but not yet: may be he is not well:

Infirmity doth still neglect all office

Whereto our health is bound; we are not ourselves

When nature being oppress'd commands the mind

To suffer with the body: I'll forbear;

And am fall'n out with my more headier will,

To take the indisposed and sickly fit

For the sound man. [*Looking on Kent*] Death on my
state! wherefore

110

Should he sit here? This act persuades me

That this remotion of the duke and her

100 *commands her service*] Thus most copies of the First Quarto. The
Folios read less intelligibly *commands, tends, service*.

108-110 *fall'n out . . . sound man*] angered with my too headstrong will,
in mistaking a man suffering from a fit of indisposition and sickness
for one in health.

112 *remotion*] removal.

Is practice only. Give me my servant forth.
 Go tell the duke and's wife I'd speak with them,
 Now, presently: bid them come forth and hear me,
 Or at their chamber-door I'll beat the drum
 Till it cry sleep to death.

GLOU. I would have all well betwixt you. *[Exit.*

LEAR. O me, my heart, my rising heart! But down!

FOOL. Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels when she put 'em i' the paste alive; she knapped 'em o' the coxcombs with a stick, and cried "Down, wantons, down!" 'T was her brother that, in pure kindness to his horse, buttered his hay. 124

Re-enter GLOUCESTER, *with* CORNWALL, REGAN, *and* Servants

LEAR. Good morrow to you both.

CORN.

Hail to your grace!

[Kent is set at liberty.

REG. I am glad to see your highness.

LEAR. Regan, I think you are; I know what reason I have to think so: if thou shouldst not be glad, I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb, Sepulchring an adulteress. *[To Kent]* O, are you free? 130

113 *Give . . . forth]* Free my servant from the stocks.

117 *cry sleep to death]* murder sleep with the noise.

120 *cockney]* "cockney" is rare in the sense, apparently required here, of a female "cook" or "scullion." It is more often applied to an effeminate man or woman. But the fool talks somewhat at random.

121 *knapped]* cracked; this is the reading of the Folios. The Quartos read *rapt*.

124 *buttered his hay]* a reference to the practice of dishonest ostlers, who sold for their own profit greased hay which the horses refused.

Some other time for that. Beloved Regan,
Thy sister's naught: O Regan, she hath tied
Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture, here:

[Points to his heart.]

I can scarce speak to thee; thou'lt not believe
With how depraved a quality — O Regan!

REG. I pray you, sir, take patience: I have hope
You less know how to value her desert
Than she to scant her duty.

LEAR. Say, how is that?

REG. I cannot think my sister in the least
Would fail her obligation: if, sir, perchance
She have restrain'd the riots of your followers,
'T is on such ground and to such wholesome end
As clears her from all blame.

140

LEAR. My curses on her!

REG. O, sir, you are old;
Nature in you stands on the very verge
Of her confine: you should be ruled and led
By some discretion that discerns your state

135 *quality*] disposition.

137-138 *You less know . . . duty*] The duplication of the negative words "less know" and "scant" makes the somewhat inverted language difficult to paraphrase, though the sense is clear. The general meaning is "You are no more capable of adequately valuing her merits than she is capable of failing in her filial duty"; in other words, "she is more dutiful than you are capable of recognising."

147 *some discretion . . . state*] some discreet person that understands your helpless condition. The abstract word "discretion" is put for the concrete person, who possesses that quality. Cf. III, i, 24, *infra*, "speculations."

Better than you yourself. Therefore I pray you
That to our sister you do make return;
Say you have wrong'd her, sir.

LEAR. Ask her forgiveness? 150
Do you but mark how this becomes the house:
[*Kneeling*] "Dear daughter, I confess that I am old;
Age is unnecessary: on my knees I beg
That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed and food."

REG. Good sir, no more; these are unsightly tricks:
Return you to my sister.

LEAR. [*Rising*] Never, Regan:
She hath abated me of half my train;
Look'd black upon me; struck me with her tongue,
Most serpent-like, upon the very heart:
All the stored vengeance of heaven fall 160
On her ingrateful top! Strike her young bones,
You taking airs, with lameness.

CORN. Fie, sir, fie!

LEAR. You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding
flames

Into her scornful eyes. Infect her beauty,
You fen-suck'd fogs, drawn by the powerful sun
To fall and blast her pride.

151 *becomes the house*] fits family relations, suits the domestic ties between father and daughter.

153 *Age is unnecessary*] Old people are useless.

161 *young bones*] unborn infants.

162 *taking airs*] airs that bewitch, strike with disease. Cf. III, iv, 58, *infra*; *Hamlet*, I, i, 163, and *M. Wives*, IV, iv, 31: "And there he blasts the tree, and takes the cattle."

166 *To fall and blast*] "So that it fall and blast." Thus the Quartos.

REG. O the blest gods! so will you wish on me,
When the rash mood is on.

LEAR. No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse:
Thy tender-hefted nature shall not give 170
Thee o'er to harshness: her eyes are fierce, but thine
Do comfort and not burn. 'T is not in thee
To grudge my pleasures, to cut off my train,
To bandy hasty words, to scant my sizes,
And in conclusion to oppose the bolt
Against my coming in: thou better know'st
The offices of nature, bond of childhood,
Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude;
Thy half o' the kingdom hast thou not forgot,
Wherein I thee endow'd.

REG. Good sir, to the purpose. 180

LEAR. Who put my man i' the stocks? [*Tucket within.*]

The Folios read *To fall and blister*. "Fall" is often used transitively in Shakespeare in the sense of "humble" or "pull down." But it may have been the ordinary intransitive meaning of "fall to ruin."

168 *rash mood*] impulsive fit of passion.

170 *tender-hefted*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *tender hested*. Neither word is quite easy to understand. Shakespeare uses "hefts" in *Wint. Tale*, II, i, 45, for "hevings" (of the breast); hence *tender-hefted* may mean "of tender disposition." More commonly "heft" means either "weight" or "handle" (cf. "haft"), which would make "tender-hefted" equivalent either to "weighted with tenderness" or "manageable." "Hest" or "behest" means vow or promise, and *tender-hested* would mean "tender-vowed," "plighted to gentleness." Cf. "plighted *hest*" (Turberville, *Ovid's Epist.*, 1576, p. 141).

174 *scant my sizes*] contract my allowances. At Cambridge a sizar was one who received sizes or allowances of food from the college.

178 *Effects*] Shows, manifestations.

CORN. What trumpet's that?

REG. I know't; my sister's: this approves her letter,
That she would soon be here.

Enter OSWALD

Is your lady come?

LEAR. This is a slave whose easy-borrow'd pride
Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.
Out, varlet, from my sight!

CORN. What means your grace?

LEAR. Who stock'd my servant? Regan, I have
good hope
Thou didst not know on't. Who comes here?

Enter GONERIL

O heavens,

If you do love old men, if your sweet sway
Allow obedience, if yourselves are old, 190
Make it your cause; send down, and take my part!
[*To Gon.*] Art not ashamed to look upon this beard?
O Regan, wilt thou take her by the hand?

GON. Why not by the hand, sir? How have I
offended?

All's not offence that indiscretion finds
And dotage terms so.

182 *approves*] corroborates, confirms.

184-185 *easy-borrow'd pride . . . follows*] whose pride, assumed on easy
pretensions (*i. e.*, on no just ground) rises and falls with the shifting
favour of his mistress.

190 *Allow*] Approve of.

195 *finds*] judges, esteems.

LEAR. O sides, you are too tough;
Will you yet hold? How came my man i' the stocks?

CORN. I set him there, sir: but his own disorders
Deserved much less advancement.

LEAR. You! did you?

REG. I pray you, father, being weak, seem so. 200
If, till the expiration of your month,
You will return and sojourn with my sister,
Dismissing half your train, come then to me:
I am now from home and out of that provision
Which shall be needful for your entertainment.

LEAR. Return to her, and fifty men dismiss'd?
No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose
To wage against the enmity o' the air,
To be a comrade with the wolf and owl, —
Necessity's sharp pinch! Return with her? 210
Why, the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took
Our youngest born, I could as well be brought
To knee his throne, and, squire-like, pension beg
To keep base life afoot. Return with her?
Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter
To this detested groom. [*Pointing at Oswald.*]

GON. At your choice, sir.

LEAR. I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad:
I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell:
We'll no more meet, no more see one another:

200 *seem so*] deem yourself so, behave so.

208 *wage against*] contend with. "Wage" is rarely used intransitively.

209 *owl*] Thus the early editions. There seems no good ground for accepting Collier's suggestion *howl*.

215 *sumpter*] literally a pack-horse, but often found in the sense of "drudge."

But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter; 220
 Or rather a disease that 's in my flesh,
 Which I must needs call mine: thou art a boil,
 A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle,
 In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee;
 Let shame come when it will, I do not call it:
 I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,
 Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove:
 Mend when thou canst; be better at thy leisure:
 I can be patient; I can stay with Regan,
 I and my hundred knights.

REG. Not altogether so: 230
 I look'd not for you yet, nor am provided
 For your fit welcome. Give ear, sir, to my sister;
 For those that mingle reason with your passion
 Must be content to think you old, and so —
 But she knows what she does.

LEAR. Is this well spoken?

REG. I dare avouch it, sir: what, fifty followers?
 Is it not well? What should you need of more?
 Yea, or so many, sith that both charge and danger
 Speak 'gainst so great a number? How in one house
 Should many people under two commands 240
 Hold amity? 'T is hard, almost impossible.

223 *embossed*] swollen.

226–227 *thunder-bearer . . . high-judging*] Both expressions refer to Jupiter. Cf. *Troil. and Cress.*, II, iii, 9: “thunder-darter.” “High-judging” merely means “pronouncing judgments on high.”

233 *mingle reason . . . passion*] examine your passionate outbursts in the light of reason.

238 *charge*] expense.

GON. Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance
From those that she calls servants or from mine?

REG. Why not, my lord? If then they chanced to
slack you,

We could control them. If you will come to me,
For now I spy a danger, I entreat you
To bring but five and twenty: to no more
Will I give place or notice.

LEAR. I gave you all —

REG. And in good time you gave it.

LEAR. Made you my guardians, my depositaries, 250
But kept a reservation to be follow'd
With such a number. What, must I come to you
With five and twenty, Regan? said you so?

REG. And speak 't again, my lord; no more with me.

LEAR. Those wicked creatures yet do look well-
favour'd,

When others are more wicked; not being the worst
Stands in some rank of praise. [*To Gon.*] I'll go with
thee:

Thy fifty yet doth double five and twenty,
And thou art twice her love.

GON. Hear me, my lord:

What need you five and twenty, ten, or five, 260
To follow in a house where twice so many
Have a command to tend you?

248 *notice*] recognition.

250 *depositaries*] trustees.

251 *reservation*] used in the legal sense of saving clause, as in I, i, 133,
supra.

Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,
Or ere I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad!

[*Exeunt Lear, Gloucester, Kent, and Fool.*]

CORN. Let us withdraw; 't will be a storm.

[*Storm and tempest.*]

REG. This house is little: the old man and his people
Cannot be well bestow'd.

GON. 'T is his own blame; hath put himself from rest,
And must needs taste his folly. 290

REG. For his particular, I'll receive him gladly,
But not one follower.

GON. So am I purposed.

Where is my lord of Gloucester?

CORN. Follow'd the old man forth: he is return'd.

Re-enter GLOUCESTER

GLOU. The king is in high rage.

CORN. Whither is he going?

GLOU. He calls to horse; but will I know not whither.

CORN. 'T is best to give him way; he leads himself.

GON. My lord, entreat him by no means to stay.

GLOU. Alack, the night comes on, and the bleak
winds

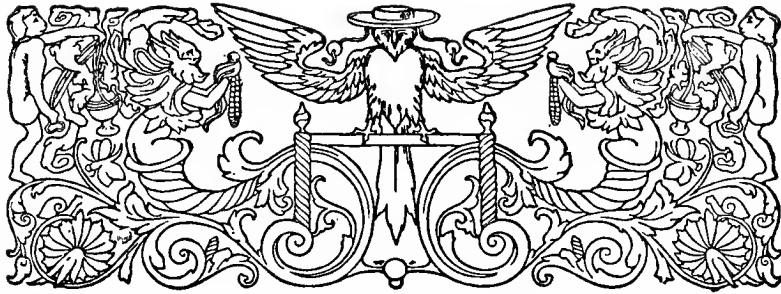
Do sorely ruffle; for many miles about 300
There's scarce a bush.

284 *flaws*] usually "cracks" or "chinks," but not uncommonly "fragments." The word is specifically used of thin parings of precious stones.

291 *For his particular*] In his own person, as for himself alone.

298 *entreat . . . no means*] do not on any account entreat him.

300 *ruffle*] bluster.



ACT THIRD — SCENE I

A HEATH

Storm still. Enter KENT and a Gentleman, meeting

KENT



WHO'S THERE, BESIDES
foul weather?

GENT. One minded like the
weather, most unquietly.

KENT. I know you. Where's
the king?

GENT. Contending with the
fretful elements;
Bids the wind blow the earth into
the sea,
Or swell the curled waters 'bove
the main,
That things might change or
cease; tears his white hair,

Which the impetuous blasts, with eyeless rage,
Catch in their fury, and make nothing of;

6 main] mainland.

7-15 *tears his white hair . . . what will take all*] This passage is
omitted from the Folios. It occurs only in the Quartos.

Strives in his little world of man to out-scorn 10
 The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain.
 This night, wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch,
 The lion and the belly-pinched wolf
 Keep their fur dry, unbonneted he runs,
 And bids what will take all.

KENT. But who is with him?

GENT. None but the fool; who labours to out-jest
 His heart-struck injuries.

KENT. Sir, I do know you;
 And dare, upon the warrant of my note,
 Commend a dear thing to you. There is division,
 Although as yet the face of it be cover'd 20
 With mutual cunning, 'twixt Albany and Cornwall;
 Who have — as who have not, that their great stars
 Throned and set high? — servants, who seem no less,

8 *eyeless*] blind, undiscerning.

9 *make nothing of*] toss about irreverently.

10 *his little world of man*] Elizabethans were very fond of comparing man
 to a little world or microcosm. Cf. *2 Hen. IV*, IV, iii, 107: "this little
 kingdom, man."

12 *cub-drawn*] sucked dry by the cubs, and thereby rendered hungry and
 ferocious.

13 *belly-pinched*] ravenous.

15 *what will take all*] a common exclamation of hopeless despair.

18 *upon the warrant of my note*] on the strength of my knowledge of you.
 Thus the Folios. For *note* the Quartos read *Art*, which is hardly
 intelligible.

19 *a dear thing*] an urgent, desperate matter.

22-29 *Who have . . . furnishings*] These lines are omitted from the
 Quartos. They appear only in the Folios.

22-23 *as who . . . set high?*] as what persons have not, whose eminent
 fortune has ever elevated them to thrones.

Which are to France the spies and speculations
 Intelligent of our state; what hath been seen,
 Either in snuffs and packings of the dukes,
 Or the hard rein which both of them have borne
 Against the old kind king, or something deeper,
 Whereof perchance these are but furnishings, —
 But true it is, from France there comes a power 30
 Into this scatter'd kingdom; who already;
 Wise in our negligence, have secret feet
 In some of our best ports, and are at point
 To show their open banner. Now to you:
 If on my credit you dare build so far
 To make your speed to Dover, you shall find
 Some that will thank you, making just report
 Of how unnatural and bemadding sorrow
 The king hath cause to plain.
 I am a gentleman of blood and breeding, 40
 And from some knowledge and assurance offer
 This office to you.

24-28 *speculations . . . king*] observers giving intelligence about our political affairs; reporting what has been noticed either in the matter of the jealous quarrels and underhand intrigues of the dukes one against another or the cruel tyranny which both have exerted on the kind old king. "Speculations" is another instance of the abstract used for the concrete. Cf. II, iv, 147, *supra*.

29 *furnishings*] trimmings, appendages.

30-42 *But true . . . to you*] These lines are omitted from the Folios. They are found only in the Quartos.

30 *a power*] a military force.

31 *scatter'd*] divided, disunited.

32 *have secret feet*] have secretly set foot. Cf. III, iii, 13, *infra*: "a power already footed."

33-34 *at point To show*] on the point of showing.

GENT. I will talk further with you.

KENT. No, do not.

For confirmation that I am much more
Than my out-wall, open this purse and take
What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia, —
As fear not but you shall, — show her this ring,
And she will tell you who your fellow is
That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm!
I will go seek the king.

GENT. Give me your hand: 50

Have you no more to say?

KENT. Few words, but, to effect, more than all yet;
That when we have found the king, — in which your
pain
That way, I'll this, — he that first lights on him
Holla the other. [*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II — ANOTHER PART OF THE HEATH

STORM STILL

Enter LEAR and Fool

LEAR. Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage!
blow!

You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout

45 *out-wall*] exterior.

48 *your fellow*] your present companion.

52 *to effect*] in effect, in importance.

53-54 *in which your pain . . . I'll this*] in which your endeavours shall
take that way, while I'll take this direction.

2 *cataracts and hurricanoes*] cataracts of water falling from the heavens,

Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks !
 You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
 Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
 Singe my white head ! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
 Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world !
 Crack nature's moulds, all germins spill at once
 That make ingrateful man !

FOOL. O nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is ¹⁰
 better than this rain-water out o' door. Good nuncle,
 in, and ask thy daughters' blessing : here's a night pities
 neither wise man nor fool.

LEAR. Rumble thy bellyful ! Spit, fire ! spout, rain !
 Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters :
 I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness ;
 I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,
 You owe me no subscription : then let fall
 Your horrible pleasure ; here I stand, your slave,
 A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man : 20

and waterspouts in the sea. Cf. *Troil. and Cress.*, V, ii, 169-170 :
 "the dreadful spout Which shipman do the *hurricane* call."

3 *cocks*] the cocks on the tops of steeples.

4 *thought-executing*] working with the rapidity of thought.

5 *Vaunt-couriers*] Heralds, forerunners.

8 *germins*] seeds. Cf. *Macb.*, IV, i, 59 : "nature's *germins* tumble all
 together," and see for the whole passage, *Wint. Tale*, IV, iv, 470-471 :
 "Let *nature* crush the sides o' the earth together, And mar the seeds
 within."

10 *court holy-water*] flattering speeches. Cotgrave (*French-Eng. Dict.*)
 gives under "Eau" the French phrase "eau beniste de Cour," which
 he explains as "*Court holy water*; compliments . . . glosing, soothing,
 palpable cogging."

18 *subscription*] allegiance.

But yet I call you servile ministers,
That have with two pernicious daughters join'd
Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. O! O! 't is foul!

FOOL. He that has a house to put's head in has a
good head-piece.

The cod-piece that will house
Before the head has any,
The head and he shall louse
So beggars marry many.
The man that makes his toe
What he his heart should make
Shall of a corn cry woe,
And turn his sleep to wake.

30

For there was never yet fair woman but she made
mouths in a glass.

LEAR. No, I will be the pattern of all patience;
I will say nothing.

23 *high-engender'd battles*] armies bred on high (*i. e.*, in the sky);
battalions recruited in the heavens.

27 *cod-piece*] a conspicuous part of masculine attire among Elizabethans.
The fool's semi-intelligible verse suggests here that he who provides
an asylum for the least worthy object about him before he takes meas-
ures to safeguard his worthier self is likely to incur filthy disgrace.

29 *louse*] suffer from lice.

30 *So beggars marry many*] A proverbial phrase, with some barely relevant
allusion here to the plague of insect-parasites that beggars invite by
their wholesale breaches of strict monogamic law.

31-34 *The man . . . wake*] The general meaning is that the man who
cherishes a mean part of his being, instead of a really vital part, is
likely to suffer pain from the very part to which he shows the unwise
preference.

Enter KENT

KENT. Who's there?

FOOL. Marry, here's grace and a cod-piece; that's a 40
wise man and a fool.

KENT. Alas, sir, are you here? things that love night
Love not such nights as these; the wrathful skies
Gallow the very wanderers of the dark,
And make them keep their caves: since I was man,
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never
Remember to have heard: man's nature cannot carry
The affliction nor the fear.

LEAR. Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads, 50
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
Unwhipp'd of justice: hide thee, thou bloody hand;
Thou perjured, and thou simular man of virtue
That art incestuous: caitiff, to pieces shake,

40 *grace*] an allusion to the expression "king's grace," the ordinary form of address to a sovereign.

cod-piece] The fool calls himself by this name, because among professional fools this part of their dress was usually exceptionally exaggerated.

42 *are you*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *sit you*.

44 *Gallow*] Frighten; a rare form of the archaic "gally." Both forms survive in dialects.

48 *carry*] bear, endure.

50 *pother*] Thus the First Quarto. The Second and Third Quartos read *Thundring*. The Folios substitute *pudder*, a variant form of "pother."

54 *simular*] simulating. Cf. *Cymb.*, V, v, 200, "with *simular* proof." The Folios omit *man*, treating "simular" as equivalent to "simulator."

That under covert and convenient seeming
 Hast practised on man's life: close pent-up guilts,
 Rive your concealing continents and cry
 These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man
 More sinn'd against than sinning.

KENT. Alack, bare-headed! 60
 Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel;
 Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest:
 Repose you there; while I to this hard house —
 More harder than the stones whereof 't is raised;
 Which even but now, demanding after you,
 Denied me to come in — return, and force
 Their scant'd courtesy.

LEAR. My wits begin to turn.
 Come on, my boy: how dost, my boy? art cold?
 I am cold myself. Where is this straw, my fellow?
 The art of our necessities is strange, 70
 That can make vile things precious. Come, your hovel.
 Poor fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
 That's sorry yet for thee.

FOOL. [*Singing*]

He that has and a little tiny wit, —
 With hey, ho, the wind and the rain, —
 Must make content with his fortunes fit,
 For the rain it raineth every day.

56 *seeming*] hypocrisy.

58-59 *Rive . . . grace*] Break the bounds of your concealment (*i.e.*, come out into the open) and ask pardon of these dread officers summoning you to justice.

70 *art*] alchemical art, which transmutes the base into the precious metals.

74-77 *He that has . . . every day*] The burden in the second and fourth

LEAR. True, my good boy. Come, bring us to this
hovel. [*Exeunt Lear and Kent.*]

FOOL. This is a brave night to cool a courtezan. I'll
speak a prophecy ere I go: 80

When priests are more in word than matter;
When brewers mar their malt with water;
When nobles are their tailors' tutors;
No heretics burn'd, but wenches' suitors;
When every case in law is right;
No squire in debt, nor no poor knight;
When slanders do not live in tongues,
Nor cutpurses come not to throngs;
When usurers tell their gold i' the field,
And bawds and whores do churches build; 90
Then shall the realm of Albion
Come to great confusion:
Then comes the time, who lives to see 't,
That going shall be used with feet.

This prophecy Merlin shall make; for I live before his
time. [*Exit.*]

lines of the song occur in the clown's concluding song, *Tw. Night*, V, i, 375, *seq.*, of which the first line "When that I was and a little tiny boy" resembles the first line of the fool's song here. In both lines "and" is a common expletive.

79-96 *This . . . time* [*Exit*] This passage only appears in the Folios. It is omitted from the Quartos.

81-94 *When priests . . . with feet*] These lines are adapted, after the manner of parody, from a popular piece of mediæval verse often called *Chaucer's prophecy*, although there is small ground for assigning it to Chaucer. The piece is quoted inaccurately in Puttenham's *Art of English Poesie*, 1589 (ed. Arber, p. 232).

84 *burn'd, but wenches' suitors*] an allusion to the fever of venereal disease.

95 *Merlin*] The prophet of Arthurian romance, to whom was popularly

SCENE III — GLOUCESTER'S CASTLE

Enter GLOUCESTER and EDMUND

GLOU. Alack, alack, Edmund, I like not this unnatural dealing. When I desired their leave that I might pity him, they took from me the use of mine own house; charged me, on pain of their perpetual displeasure, neither to speak of him, entreat for him, nor any way sustain him.

EDM. Most savage and unnatural!

GLOU. Go to; say you nothing. There's a division betwixt the dukes, and a worse matter than that: I have received a letter this night; 't is dangerous to be spoken; 10 I have locked the letter in my closet: these injuries the king now bears will be revenged home; there is part of a power already footed: we must incline to the king. I will seek him and privily relieve him: go you, and maintain talk with the duke, that my charity be not of him perceived: if he ask for me, I am ill and gone to bed. Though I die for it, as no less is threatened me, the king my old master must be relieved. There is some strange thing toward, Edmund; pray you, be careful.

[*Exit.* 20

assigned many current prophetic utterances. Cf. *1 Hen. IV*, III, i, 150: "the dreamer *Merlin* and his prophecies."

13 *footed*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *landed*, which gives the requisite sense. Cf. III, i, 32, *supra*: "a power . . . who already . . . have secret *feet*."

EDM. This courtesy, forbid thee, shall the duke
 Instantly know, and of that letter too:
 This seems a fair deserving, and must draw me
 That which my father loses; no less than all:
 The younger rises when the old doth fall. [Exit.]

SCENE IV — THE HEATH

BEFORE A HOVEL

Enter LEAR, KENT, and Fool

KENT. Here is the place, my lord: good my lord,
 enter:
 The tyranny of the open night's too rough
 For nature to endure. [Storm still.]

LEAR. Let me alone.

KENT. Good my lord, enter here.

LEAR. Wilt break my heart?

KENT. I had rather break mine own. Good my lord,
 enter.

LEAR. Thou think'st 't is much that this contentious
 storm
 Invades us to the skin: so 't is to thee;
 But where the greater malady is fix'd
 The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'ldst shun a bear,

21 *forbid thee*] which has been forbidden thee.

23 *a fair deserving*] an action deserving fair recognition.

But if thy flight lay toward the raging sea 10
 Thou'ldst meet the bear i' the mouth. When the mind's
 free

The body's delicate: the tempest in my mind
 Doth from my senses take all feeling else
 Save what beats there. Filial ingratitude!
 Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand
 For lifting food to 't? But I will punish home.
 No, I will weep no more. In such a night
 To shut me out! Pour on; I will endure.
 In such a night as this! O Regan, Goneril!
 Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave you all, — 20
 O, that way madness lies; let me shun that;
 No more of that.

KENT. Good my lord, enter here.

LEAR. Prithee, go in thyself; seek thine own ease:
 This tempest will not give me leave to ponder
 On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in.
 [*To the Fool*] In, boy; go first. You houseless poverty, —
 Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.

[Fool goes in.]

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
 That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
 How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides, 30
 Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you

11-12 *When the mind's . . . delicate*] When the mind's free from care
 the body is sensitive to every outward pain.

26-27 *In, boy . . . sleep*] These lines are omitted from the Quartos.

26 *poverty*] poor creature, pauper, beggar; another instance of the abstract
 for the concrete. Cf. II, iv, 147, and III, i, 24, *supra*.

31 *loop'd and window'd*] full of holes and apertures.

From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
 Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
 Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
 That thou mayst shake the superflux to them
 And show the heavens more just.

EDG. [*Within*] Fathom and half, fathom and half!
 Poor Tom! [*The Fool runs out from the hovel.*]

FOOL. Come not in here, nunce, here's a spirit. Help
 me, help me! 40

KENT. Give me thy hand. Who's there?

FOOL. A spirit, a spirit: he says his name's poor Tom.

KENT. What art thou that dost grumble there i' the
 straw?

Come forth.

Enter EDGAR disguised as a madman

EDG. Away! the foul fiend follows me!

Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind.

Hum! go to thy cold bed and warm thee.

LEAR. Hast thou given all to thy two daughters? and
 art thou come to this?

EDG. Who gives any thing to poor Tom? whom the 50
 foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame,
 through ford and whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire;
 that hath laid knives under his pillow and halters in his

37 *Fathom and half*] Probably Edgar refers to the depth of the flood of
 rain from which he is taking refuge in the hovel.

47 *go . . . warm thee*] This colloquial ejaculation appears also in *T. of
 Shrew*, Induction, I, 8.

53-54 *laid knives . . . pew*] The devil was popularly credited with plac-

pew; set ratsbane by his porridge; made him proud of heart, to ride on a bay trotting-horse over four-inched bridges, to course his own shadow for a traitor. Bless thy five wits! Tom's a-cold. O, do de, do de, do de. Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting, and taking! Do poor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes. There could I have him now, and there, and there again, 60 and there. [Storm still.]

LEAR. What, have his daughters brought him to this pass?

Couldst thou save nothing? Didst thou give them all?

FOOL. Nay, he reserved a blanket, else we had been all shamed.

LEAR. Now, all the plagues that in the pendulous air Hang fated o'er men's faults light on thy daughters!

ing such temptations to suicide in the way of possessed or insane persons. Shakespeare would seem to have been acquainted with Samuel Harsnet's "*A Declaration of egregious Popish Impostures . . . vnder the pretence of Casting out devils. Practised by . . . a Jesuit and divers Romish priests*" (London, 1603, quarto). Harsnet quotes evidence to show that the devil was represented by an obvious trick to have placed within reach of an alleged lunatic "a new halter and two blades of knives." Shakespeare would seem to have derived from Harsnet the names of all the so-called demons or devils, whom Edgar mentions below.

57 *five wits*] The "wits" were reckoned of the same number as the senses. Cf. III, vi, 55, *infra*, and cf. *Tw. Night*, IV, ii, 83, and note.

O, do de, do de, do de] An onomatopœic expression of shivering. The words are omitted from the Quartos. Cf. III, vi, 73, *infra*.

58 *taking*] bewitchment, infection by witches. Cf. II, iv, 162, *supra*: "You taking airs."

66-67 *Now, all the plagues . . . daughters*] Cf. *Tim. of Ath.*, IV, iii, 108-

KENT. He hath no daughters, sir.

LEAR. Death, traitor! nothing could have subdued
nature

To such a lowness but his unkind daughters. 70

Is it the fashion that discarded fathers
Should have thus little mercy on their flesh?
Judicious punishment! 't was this flesh begot
Those pelican daughters.

EDG. Pillicock sat on Pillicock-hill:
 Halloo, halloo, loo, loo!

FOOL. This cold night will turn us all to fools and
madmen.

EDG. Take heed o' the foul fiend: obey thy parents;
keep thy word justly; swear not; commit not with man's ⁸⁰
sworn spouse; set not thy sweet heart on proud array.
Tom's a-cold.

LEAR. What hast thou been?

EDG. A serving-man, proud in heart and mind; that
curled my hair; wore gloves in my cap; served the lust
of my mistress' heart and did the act of darkness with

110: "Be as a planetary plague, when Jove Will o'er some high-
viced city hang his poison In the sick air."

72 *little mercy on their flesh*] apparently a reference to the pins or thorns
which crazy beggars stuck in their flesh; cf. II, iii, 15-16, *supra*.

74 *pelican daughters*] The young of the pelican was commonly credited
with drinking its parent's blood.

75 *Pillicock . . . Pillicock-hill*] A nursery rhyme. "Pillicock," which had an
indelicate meaning, was often used as a term of endearment for children.

85 *wore gloves in my cap*] Mistresses' favours often took the form of gloves
and were worn in the admirers' caps. Cressida begs Troilus wear
her glove. Cf. *Troil. and Cress.*, IV, iv, 73.

her; swore as many oaths as I spake words and broke them in the sweet face of heaven: one that slept in the contriving of lust and waked to do it: wine loved I deeply, dice dearly, and in woman out-paramoured the Turk: false of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand; hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey. Let not the creaking of shoes nor the rustling of silks betray thy poor heart to woman: keep thy foot out of brothels, thy hand out of plackets, thy pen from lenders' books, and defy the foul fiend.

"Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind."

Says suum, mun, ha, no, nonny.

Dolphin my boy, my boy, sessa! let him trot by.

[*Storm still.*]

LEAR. Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity of the

91 *light of ear*] credulous of slanderous gossip or of obscenity.

95 *plackets*] the apertures in petticoats.

97-99 *Still through . . . trot by*] The Globe text first printed these lines as verse. The early editions give them as prose.

98 *Says suum . . . nonny*] A combination due to Steevens, of the Folio reading *sayes, suum, mun, monny* and the Quarto reading *hay no on ny*. "Hey nonny nonny" was a common burden of a song. Cf. *Much Ado*, II, iii, 64.

99 *Dolphin my boy*] An almost meaningless colloquial form of address which appears in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (Act V, Sc. iii), as "Dauphin my boy." Steevens doubtfully assigned the phrase to a popular ballad. The dolphin was often cited as a type of beauty. Cf. "A Merry Knack to know a Knave" (1594), "fairer than the *dolphin's eye*." Dodsley's *Old Plays*, ed. Hazlitt, Vol. VI, p. 514.

sessa] an interjection enjoining silence. See III, vi, 73, *infra*, and note on *T. of Shrew*, Induction, I, 5.

skies. Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! here's three on's are sophisticated. Thou art the thing itself: unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! come, unbutton here. [*Tearing off his clothes.*]

FOOL. Prithee, nuncle, be contented; 't is a naughty night to swim in. Now a little fire in a wild field were like an old lecher's heart, a small spark, all the rest on's body cold. Look, here comes a walking fire. 112

Enter GLOUCESTER, with a torch

EDG. This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet: he begins at curfew and walks till the first cock; he gives the web and the pin, squints the eye and makes the hare-lip; mildews the white wheat and hurts the poor creature of earth.

104 *the cat*] the perfumed civet cat.

105 *sophisticated*] artificially made up (by wearing clothes).

106 *unaccommodated*] unfurnished with artificial equipment.

107 *forked*] two-pronged, two-legged.

lendings] borrowed clothes.

112 *here comes a walking fire*] a reference to Gloucester's approach with a torch.

113 *Flibbertigibbet*] a traditional name of an imp or demon mentioned by Harsnet. See note on lines 53-54, *supra*.

115 *the web and the pin*] cataract of the eye. Cf. *Wint. Tale*, I, ii, 291: "pin and web."

116 *the white wheat*] the ripening wheat.

Saint Withold footed thrice the 'old;
 He met the night-mare and her nine-fold;
 Bid her alight,
 And her troth plight,
 And aroint thee, witch, aroint thee!

120

KENT. How fares your grace?

LEAR. What's he?

KENT. Who's there? What is't you seek?

GLOU. What are you there? Your names?

EDG. Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall-newt and the water; that in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cowdung for sallets; swallows the old rat and the ditch-dog; drinks the green mantle of the standing pool; who is whipped from tithing to tithing, and stock-punished, and imprisoned; who hath had three suits to his back, six shirts to his body, horse to ride and weapon to wear;

118 *Saint Withold . . . 'old*] For Saint Withold the Quartos read *Swithald*, and the Folios *Swithold*. "Sweet Swithold of thy lenity" is invoked by a friar in *The Troublesome Raigne of King John* (Six Old Plays, 1779, I, 256). No such saint apparently is noticed elsewhere, but he has been doubtfully identified with Saint Vitalis, who seems to have been invoked against nightmares. "The 'old" clearly stands for "the wold," low-lying country.

119 *nine-fold*] nine foals.

122 *aroint thee*] begone. Cf. *Macb.*, I, iii, 6: "'Aroint thee, witch!'" and note.

128 *the water*] the water-newt. "Newt" is commonly applied to the lizard.

130 *for sallets*] by way of salads.

132 *tithing*] district or parish.

But mice and rats and such small deer
Have been Tom's food for seven long year.

Beware my follower. Peace, Smulkin; peace, thou fiend!

GLOU. What, hath your grace no better company?

EDG. The prince of darkness is a gentleman: Modo
he's call'd, and Mahu. 140

GLOU. Our flesh and blood is grown so vile, my lord,
That it doth hate what gets it.

EDG. Poor Tom's a-cold.

GLOU. Go in with me: my duty cannot suffer
To obey in all your daughters' hard commands:
Though their injunction be to bar my doors
And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you,
Yet have I ventured to come seek you out
And bring you where both fire and food is ready.

LEAR. First let me talk with this philosopher. 150
What is the cause of thunder?

KENT. Good my lord, take his offer; go into the house.

LEAR. I'll talk a word with this same learned Theban.
What is your study?

135-136 *But mice and rats . . . seven long year*] The lines are cited with slight modifications from the mediæval metrical romance of *Bevis of Hampton*; "deer" means game.

137 *Smulkin*] the name of one of the fiends noticed, like "Modo" and "Mahu," lines 139, 140, *infra*, by Harsnet. See note on lines 53, 54, *supra*.

142 *gets*] begets. Gloucester, who similarly uses "got" for "begot" (II, i, 80, *supra*), is reflecting on the undutifulness of his son Edgar, whom he does not recognise in his disguise, as well as on that of Lear's daughters.

153 *learned Theban*] an ironical incoherence. A Theban or Bœotian — Thebes was the chief city of Bœotia—commonly connotes stupidity.

EDG. How to prevent the fiend and to kill vermin.

LEAR. Let me ask you one word in private.

KENT. Importune him once more to go, my lord;
His wits begin to unsettle.

GLOU. Canst thou blame him?

[*Storm still.*]

His daughters seek his death: ah, that good Kent!
He said it would be thus, poor banish'd man! 160
Thou say'st the king grows mad; I'll tell thee, friend,
I am almost mad myself: I had a son,
Now outlaw'd from my blood; he sought my life,
But lately, very late: I loved him, friend,
No father his son dearer: truth to tell thee,
The grief hath crazed my wits. What a night's
this!

I do beseech your grace, —

LEAR. O, cry you mercy, sir.

Noble philosopher, your company.

EDG. Tom's a-cold.

GLOU. In, fellow, there, into the hovel: keep thee
warm. 170

LEAR. Come, let's in all.

KENT. This way, my lord.

LEAR. With him;

I will keep still with my philosopher.

KENT. Good my lord, soothe him; let him take the
fellow.

GLOU. Take him you on.

KENT. Sirrah, come on; go along with us.

163 *outlaw'd from my blood*] disowned and disinherited.

LEAR. Come, good Athenian.

GLOU. No words, no words: hush.

EDG. Child Rowland to the dark tower came:
His word was still "Fie, foh, and fum,
I smell the blood of a British man."

[*Exeunt.* 180]

SCENE V — GLOUCESTER'S CASTLE

Enter CORNWALL and EDMUND

CORN. I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.

EDM. How, my lord, I may be censured, that nature thus gives way to loyalty, something fears me to think of.

178-180 *Child Rowland . . . British man*] These lines are probably scraps from one or (it may be) two old ballads, which are not positively known to have been handed down in full. Doubt exists as to the antiquity and authenticity of an extant Scottish ballad called "Child Roland and Burd Ellen," dealing with an heroic rescue by the "Child Roland" of his sister Ellen from a giant's enchantment. This ballad in its present shape contains the lines "with fie, fie, fo and fum, I smell the blood of a Christian man," but they are possibly based on Shakespeare's lines. (Cf. Child, *Ballads*, I, 245.) The words "Fy, fa, fum, I smell the bloud of an English-man," are quoted as too familiar a colloquialism to deserve discussion, in Nashe's *Have with you to Saffron Walden*, 1596. (Nashe's Works, ed. McKerrow, III, 37). They possibly belong to an early (lost) version of a nursery ballad of Jack the Giant Killer, of which Child Roland may perhaps have been the hero's original name; but precise evidence is lacking. For Shakespeare's use of "British" here in place of English see IV, vi, 252, *infra*, and note.

2-3 *How, my lord . . . fears me to think of*] I am somewhat afraid, my lord, of the opinion that may be formed of me, in that I sacrifice my filial feeling to my sense of loyalty to you.

CORN. I now perceive, it was not altogether your brother's evil disposition made him seek his death, but a provoking merit, set a-work by a reproveable badness in himself.

EDM. How malicious is my fortune, that I must repent to be just! This is the letter he spoke of, which approves him an intelligent party to the advantages of France. O heavens! that this treason were not, or not I the detector!

CORN. Go with me to the duchess.

EDM. If the matter of this paper be certain, you have mighty business in hand.

CORN. True or false, it hath made thee earl of Gloucester. Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our apprehension.

EDM. [*Aside*] If I find him comforting the king, it will stuff his suspicion more fully. — I will persevere in my course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that and my blood.

CORN. I will lay trust upon thee, and thou shalt find a dearer father in my love. [*Exeunt.*

6-7 *a provoking merit . . . in himself*] a certain measure of virtue, which prompted action, being set in motion by a reprehensible depravity in his father's own nature.

10 *an intelligent party*] an informer, a spy.

19 *comforting*] supporting (as a legal accessory); the word is used in its legal sense.

22 *my blood*] my natural feeling.

SCENE VI—A CHAMBER IN A FARMHOUSE
ADJOINING THE CASTLE

Enter GLOUCESTER, LEAR, KENT, Fool, *and* EDGAR

GLOU. Here is better than the open air; take it thankfully. I will piece out the comfort with what addition I can: I will not be long from you.

KENT. All the power of his wits have given way to his impatience: the gods reward your kindness!

[Exit Gloucester.]

EDG. Frateretto calls me, and tells me Nero is an angler in the lake of darkness. Pray, innocent, and beware the foul fiend.

FOOL. Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman. 10

LEAR. A king, a king!

FOOL. No, he's a yeoman that has a gentleman to his son, for he's a mad yeoman that sees his son a gentleman before him.

LEAR. To have a thousand with red burning spits
Come hissing in upon 'em, —

6 *Frateretto*] The name of a fiend in Harsnet. See note on III, iv, 53-54, *supra*.

6-7 *Nero . . . darkness*] According to Rabelais (*Pantagruel*, II, 30) Trajan in hell was an angler for frogs, while Nero was there as a fiddler. Possibly Shakespeare was thinking confusedly of Rabelais' remark. There seems no historic ground for describing Nero as an angler.

12-15 *No, he's a yeoman . . . before him*] This speech of the fool is omitted from the Quartos; it is only found in the Folios.

EDG. The foul fiend bites my back.

FOOL. He's mad that trusts in the tameness of a wolf,
a horse's health, a boy's love, or a whore's oath.

LEAR. It shall be done; I will arraign them straight. ²⁰
[*To Edgar*] Come, sit thou here, most learned justicer;
[*To the Fool*] Thou, sapient sir, sit here. Now, you she
foxes!

EDG. Look, where he stands and glares! Wantest
thou eyes at trial, madam?

Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me.

FOOL. Her boat hath a leak,
And she must not speak
Why she dares not come over to thee.

EDG. The foul fiend haunts poor Tom in the voice of
a nightingale. Hopdance cries in Tom's belly for two ³⁰

17-55 *The foul fiend . . . let her 'scape*] This passage occurs only in the Quartos; it is omitted from the Folios.

19 *a horse's health*] A horse's health was notoriously held to be uncertain. Cf. *T. of Shrew*, III, ii, 46, *seq.*, for a long list of diseases to which horses were subject. Cf. *ibid.*, I, ii, 79: "as many diseases as two and fifty horses."

21 *justicer*] justiciar, judge of a high court. Theobald's emendation of the Quarto reading *iustice*, which might possibly be retained. But cf. *Cymb.*, V, v, 214: "some upright *justicer*."

23-24 *Wantest thou eyes at trial, madam?*] These words are crazily addressed to Goneril or her sister ("she-foxes"), and implies that the woman who is on her trial fails to see the fiend who "stands and glares."

25 *Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me*] The first line of a popular ballad, dating certainly as early as Henry VIII's reign. The music is also preserved. Cf. Rimbault's *Songs and Ballads*, 1851, pp. 71-76. The Quartos wrongly read *broome* for *bourne* (*i. e.*, brook).

30 *Hopdance*] Pope's spelling of the Quarto *Hoppedance*. Harsnet men-

white herring. Croak not, black angel; I have no food for thee.

KENT. How do you, sir? Stand you not so amazed: Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?

LEAR. I'll see their trial first. Bring in the evidence.
 [To Edgar] Thou robed man of justice, take thy place;
 [To the Fool] And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity,
 Bench by his side. [To Kent] You are o' the commission;
 Sit you too.

EDG. Let us deal justly.

40

Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd?
 Thy sheep be in the corn;
 And for one blast of thy minikin mouth,
 Thy sheep shall take no harm.

Pur! the cat is gray.

LEAR. Arraign her first; 't is Goneril. I here take my oath before this honourable assembly, she kicked the poor king her father.

FOOL. Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

tions a fiend called Hobberdidaunce, who figures IV, i, 61, *infra*, as Hobbididance. See note on III, iv, 53-54, *supra*.

31 *white herring*] more often used for fresh herring than pickled herring.

36 *robed*] Edgar is wrapped in a blanket; see III, iv, 65, *supra*.

38 *the commission*] the commission of justices of the peace.

41-44 *Sleepest . . . harm*] Possibly a stanza from some unidentified popular song of the day. Many early ballads contain the expression "sleep you, wake you." Cf. Percy's Folio MS., Vol. I, p. 70.

43 *minikin*] pretty, dainty.

45 *Pur! . . . gray*] A demon is designated "Purre" by Harsnet. But Edgar may only be imitating a cat, with a suggestion that he, like the animal, is too "gray" (*i. e.*, too old) to sing.

LEAR. She cannot deny it. 50

FOOL. Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint-stool.

LEAR. And here's another, whose warp'd looks proclaim

What store her heart is made on. Stop her there!
Arms, arms, sword, fire! Corruption in the place!
False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape?

EDG. Bless thy five wits!

KENT. O pity! Sir, where is the patience now,
That you so oft have boasted to retain?

EDG. [*Aside*] My tears begin to take his part so much,
They'll mar my counterfeiting. 60

LEAR. The little dogs and all,
Tray, Blanch, and Sweet-heart, see, they bark at me.

EDG. Tom will throw his head at them. Avaunt, you curs!

Be thy mouth or black or white,
Tooth that poisons if it bite;
Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim,
Hound or spaniel, brach or lym,
Or bobtail tike or trundle-tail,

Tom will make them weep and wail: 70

51 *I took you for a joint-stool*] A proverbial phrase for a mock apology.

A "joint-stool" was a folding stool. See note on *T. of Shrew*, II, i, 197.

52-53 *whose warp'd looks . . . made on*] whose perverse expression shows what stuff her heart is made of.

56 *five wits*] See note on III, iv, 57, *supra*.

68 *brach or lym*] bitch hound or bloodhound. *Lym* is Hanmer's correction of the Quarto reading *him* and the Folio *Hym*. "Lymmer" or "limehound" was a term applied to the bloodhound, which was always led by a "leam," or "liam," *i. e.*, a leather thong or heavy leash. For "brach," cf. I, iv, 111, *supra*.

69 *trundle-tail*] a dog with a curled tail.

For, with throwing thus my head,
Dogs leap the hatch, and all are fled.

Do de, de, de. Sessa! Come, march to wakes and fairs
and market-towns. Poor Tom, thy horn is dry.

LEAR. Then let them anatomize Regan; see what
breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in nature
that makes these hard hearts? [*To Edgar*] You, sir, I
entertain for one of my hundred; only I do not like the
fashion of your garments. You will say they are Persian
attire; but let them be changed. 80

KENT. Now, good my lord, lie here and rest awhile.

LEAR. Make no noise, make no noise; draw the cur-
tains: so, so, so. We'll go to supper i' the morning.
So, so, so.

FOOL. And I'll go to bed at noon.

Re-enter GLOUCESTER

GLOU. Come hither, friend: where is the king my
master?

KENT. Here, sir; but trouble him not: his wits are
gone.

72 *the hatch*] the half-door.

73 *Do, de, de, de*] See note III, iv, 57, *supra*.

Sessa] See III, iv, 99, *supra*, and note on *T. of Shrew*, Induction, I, 5.

74 *horn*] a drinking-cup of horn usually carried by beggars.

79-80 *Persian attire*] perhaps a reminiscence of Horace, *Odes*, Bk. I, Ode
xxxviii: "Persicos apparatus," *i. e.*, the gorgeous robes of the East.

85 *And . . . noon*] This speech is omitted from the Quartos. These are
the last words spoken by the fool in the play. The expression is often
used to describe an easy way of life. It seems to lack recondite
significance.

GLOU. Good friend, I prithee, take him in thy arms ;
 I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him :
 There is a litter ready ; lay him in 't, 90
 And drive toward Dover, friend, where thou shalt meet
 Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master :
 If thou shouldst dally half an hour, his life,
 With thine and all that offer to defend him,
 Stand in assured loss. Take up, take up,
 And follow me, that will to some provision
 Give thee quick conduct.

KENT. Oppressed nature sleeps.
 This rest might yet have balm'd thy broken sinews,
 Which, if convenience will not allow,
 Stand in hard cure. [*To the Fool*] Come, help to bear
thy master ; 100
 Thou must not stay behind.

GLOU. Come, come, away.
[*Exeunt all but Edgar.*]

EDG. When we our betters see bearing our woes,
 We scarcely think our miseries our foes.

89 *upon him*] against him.

95 *Stand in assured loss*] Are exposed to certain ruin. No uncommon construction. Cf. "Stand in hard cure" (line 100, *infra*).

97-101 *Oppressed . . . behind*] This speech is omitted from the Folios.

98 *broken sinews*] shattered nerves.

100 *Stand in hard cure*] Must prove difficult to cure. Cf., for the expression, line 95, *supra*: "Stand in assured loss."

102-115 *When we . . . lurk*] The whole of this soliloquy is omitted from the Folios, and only appears in the Quartos. Doubts have been raised as to Shakespeare's full responsibility for it. But though the sententious rhyming has pathetic effect, parallels are to be found for it in his authentic work.

Who alone suffers suffers most i' the mind,
 Leaving free things and happy shows behind:
 But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip,
 When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.
 How light and portable my pain seems now,
 When that which makes me bend makes the king bow,
 He childed as I father'd! Tom, away! 110
 Mark the high noises, and thyself bewray
 When false opinion, whose wrong thought defiles thee,
 In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee.
 What will hap more to-night, safe 'scape the king!
 Lurk, lurk. [Exit.]

SCENE VII — GLOUCESTER'S CASTLE

Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GONERIL, EDMUND, *and* Servants

CORN. Post speedily to my lord your husband; show him this letter: the army of France is landed. Seek out the traitor Gloucester. [Exit some of the Servants.]

REG. Hang him instantly.

105 *free things*] things free of trouble.

107 *bearing*] suffering. The word is a substantive.

110 *He childed as I father'd*] A bold use. Such conversion of substantives into verbs is not uncommon in Shakespeare.

111-114 *Mark the high noises . . . hap more*] Note the loud, ominous signs of approaching disturbance, and betray or declare yourself when that false opinion about you of which the error defiles thee shall in presence of just proof of thy integrity repeal the dishonourable verdict and recall thee to the life of honour now denied thee. Whatever further happens, etc.

2 *this letter*] The letter which Edmund has already given to Cornwall, III, v, 9, *et seq.*, *supra*.

GON. Pluck out his eyes.

CORN. Leave him to my displeasure. Edmund, keep you our sister company: the revenges we are bound to take upon your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding. Advise the duke, where you are going, to a most festinate preparation: we are bound to the like.¹⁰ Our posts shall be swift and intelligent betwixt us. Farewell, dear sister: farewell, my lord of Gloucester.

Enter OSWALD

How now! where's the king?

Osw. My lord of Gloucester hath convey'd him hence:

Some five or six and thirty of his knights,
Hot questrists after him, met him at gate;
Who, with some other of the lords dependants,
Are gone with him toward Dover; where they boast
To have well-armed friends.

CORN. Get horses for your mistress.

7 *bound*] prepared, committed. So in line 10, *infra*. Cf. *Hamlet*, I, v, 6: "Speak; I am *bound* to hear."

10 *festinate*] hurried; a pedantic word. Cf. *L. L. L.*, III, i, 6: "festinately."

11 *intelligent*] giving full information. Cf. III, i, 25, *supra*.

12 *my lord of Gloucester*] These words are addressed to Edmund, whom Cornwall somewhat prematurely invests with his father's title. Oswald in line 14 applies the title to the father.

16 *questrists*] searchers or pursuers (engaged in the quest); a very rare word.

17 *lords dependants*] Thus the Quartos. The First Folio reads *Lords, dependants*, which gives the right sense. It is likely that these companions of Lear were vassals of Cornwall, who now forsake their allegiance. Pope substituted *lord's dependants*, meaning less satisfactorily Gloucester's followers.

GON. Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.

20

CORN. Edmund, farewell.

[*Exeunt Goneril, Edmund, and Oswald.*]

Go seek the traitor Gloucester.

Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us.

[*Exeunt other Servants.*]

Though well we may not pass upon his life

Without the form of justice, yet our power

Shall do a courtesy to our wrath, which men

May blame but not control. Who's there? the traitor?

Enter GLOUCESTER, brought in by two or three

REG. Ingrateful fox! 't is he.

CORN. Bind fast his corky arms.

GLOU. What mean your graces? Good my friends,
consider

You are my guests: do me no foul play, friends. 30

CORN. Bind him, I say. [*Servants bind him.*]

REG. Hard, hard. O filthy traitor!

GLOU. Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

CORN. To this chair bind him. Villain, thou shalt
find — [*Regan plucks his beard.*]

GLOU. By the kind gods, 't is most ignobly done
To pluck me by the beard.

REG. So white, and such a traitor!

GLOU. Naughty lady,
These hairs which thou dost ravish from my chin

23 *pass upon his life*] pass sentence of death on him.

25 *do a courtesy to*] indulge, gratify.

28 *corky*] sapless, shrivelled with age.

Will quicken and accuse thee: I am your host:
 With robbers' hands my hospitable favours
 You should not ruffle thus. What will you do? 40

CORN. Come, sir, what letters had you late from
 France?

REG. Be simple answerer, for we know the truth.

CORN. And what confederacy have you with the
 traitors

Late footed in the kingdom?

REG. To whose hands have you sent the lunatic king?
 Speak.

GLOU. I have a letter guessingly set down,
 Which came from one that's of a neutral heart,
 And not from one opposed.

CORN. Cunning.

REG. And false.

CORN. Where hast thou sent the king?

GLOU. To Dover. 50

REG. Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not charged
 at peril —

CORN. Wherefore to Dover? Let him first answer
 that.

GLOU. I am tied to the stake, and I must stand the
 course.

REG. Wherefore to Dover, sir?

38 *quicken*] assume life.

39 *my hospitable favours*] the face or features of me your host.

47 *guessingly set down*] written from conjecture.

53 *the course*] the attack; the bout; the onset of dogs baiting the bear,
 according to the custom of the sport. Cf. *Macb.*, V, vii, 2: "bearlike
 I must fight *the course*."

GLOU. Because I would not see thy cruel nails
 Pluck out his poor old eyes, nor thy fierce sister
 In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.
 The sea, with such a storm as his bare head
 In hell-black night endured, would have buoy'd up,
 And quench'd the stelled fires: 60
 Yet, poor old heart, he holp the heavens to rain.
 If wolves had at thy gate howl'd that stern time,
 Thou shouldst have said, "Good porter, turn the key,"
 All cruels else subscribed: but I shall see
 The winged vengeance overtake such children.

CORN. See't shalt thou never. Fellows, hold the chair.
 Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.

GLOU. He that will think to live till he be old,
 Give me some help! O cruel! O you gods!

REG. One side will mock another; the other too. 70

CORN. If you see vengeance —

FIRST SERV. Hold your hand, my lord:
 I have served you ever since I was a child;

57 *stick*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *rash*, a term often applied to the rending of flesh by a boar's tusks.

59 *buoy'd up*] risen up like a buoy, which was sunk in water.

60 *stelled*] probably "fixed," "everlasting." In *Sonnet xxiv*, and *Lucrece*, 1444, "stelled" is found in the sense of "firmly fixed." Theobald less satisfactorily connected "stelled" with "stellatus," *i. e.*, starry.

62 *stern*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *dearne*, *i. e.*, dreary. Cf. *Pericles*, III, Prol., 15: "a *dern* and painful perch," and note.

64 *All cruels else subscribed*] All their cruelty and fierceness in other circumstances being forgiven or condoned. Thus the Quartos. For *subscribed* the Folios read *subscribe*, which it is difficult to interpret, though the phrase might then mean "All other cruel beings in such circumstances yield their ferocity" or "show some humanity."

But better service have I never done you
Than now to bid you hold.

REG. How now, you dog!

FIRST SERV. If you did wear a beard upon your chin,
I'd shake it on this quarrel. What do you mean?

CORN. My villain! *[They draw and fight.]*

FIRST SERV. Nay, then, come on, and take the chance
of anger.

REG. Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus!
[Takes a sword and runs at him behind.]

FIRST SERV. O, I am slain! My lord, you have one
eye left 80

To see some mischief on him. O! *[Dies.]*

CORN. Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly!
Where is thy lustre now?

GLOU. All dark and comfortless. Where's my son
Edmund?

Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature,
To quit this horrid act.

REG. Out, treacherous villain!
Thou call'st on him that hates thee: it was he
That made the overture of thy treasons to us;
Who is too good to pity thee.

76 *What do you mean?*] This inquiry would come more appropriately from Cornwall.

77 *My villain*] My serf; one legally bound to me in ties of servitude.

83 *Where is thy lustre now?*] The barbarity of the episode of the blinding of Gloucester exceeds in horror any other scene in Shakespeare's work. The pity shown by Cornwall's servants barely relieves the repulsiveness of the outrage.

86 *quit*] requite, repay.

88 *overture*] disclosure. Cf. *Wint. Tale*, II, i, 172.

GLOU. O my follies! Then Edgar was abused. 90
Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!

REG. Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell
His way to Dover. [*Exit one with Gloucester.*] How is't,
my lord? how look you?

CORN. I have received a hurt: follow me, lady.
Turn out that eyeless villain: throw this slave
Upon the dunghill. Regan, I bleed apace:
Untimely comes this hurt: give me your arm.

[*Exit Cornwall, led by Regan.*]

SEC. SERV. I'll never care what wickedness I do,
If this man come to good.

THIRD SERV. If she live long,
And in the end meet the old course of death, 100
Women will all turn monsters.

SEC. SERV. Let's follow the old earl, and get the
Bedlam
To lead him where he would: his roguish madness
Allows itself to any thing.

THIRD SERV. Go thou: I'll fetch some flax and
whites of eggs
To apply to his bleeding face. Now, heaven help him!
[*Exeunt severally.*]

98-106 *I'll never care . . . heaven help him*] These lines are omitted
from the Folios, and only appear in the Quartos.

100 *old*] natural, familiar.

102 *the Bedlam*] the crazy beggar, Edgar. Cf. I, ii, 129-130, and II,
iii, 14, *supra*. With a slight inconsistency Gloucester figures in the
next scene in charge not of Edgar, but of a faithful old tenant, and
meets Edgar apparently by accident.

104 *Allows itself*] Adapts itself, is amenable.

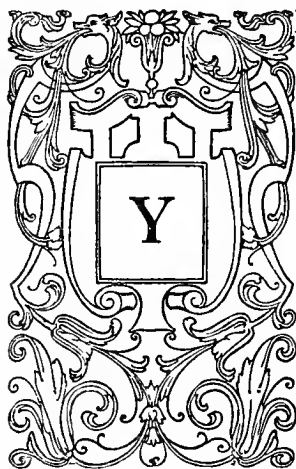


ACT FOURTH — SCENE I

THE HEATH

Enter EDGAR

EDGAR



YET BETTER THUS, AND
known to be contemn'd,
Than still contemn'd and flat-
ter'd. To be worst,
The lowest and most dejected
thing of fortune,
Stands still in esperance, lives
not in fear:
The lamentable change is from
the best;
The worst returns to laughter.
Welcome then,
Thou unsubstantial air that I
embrace!

The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst
Owes nothing to thy blasts. But who comes here?

1-2 *Yet better . . . flatter'd]* The general meaning is, "It is better to know that one is contemned than for one to be really contemned and at the same time to be treated with false flattery which conceals the

Enter GLOUCESTER, led by an Old Man

My father, poorly led? World, world, O world! 10
But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,
Life would not yield to age.

OLD MAN. O, my good lord, I have been your tenant,
and your father's tenant, these fourscore years.

GLOU. Away, get thee away; good friend, be gone:
Thy comforts can do me no good at all;
Thee they may hurt.

OLD MAN. Alack, sir, you cannot see your way.

GLOU. I have no way and therefore want no eyes;
I stumbled when I saw: full oft 't is seen, 20
Our means secure us, and our mere defects
Prove our commodities. Ah, dear son Edgar,

truth." Johnson's proposal to substitute *unknown* for *and known* conflicts with the context.

3 *most dejected thing*] thing cast down to the lowest depth.

4 *esperance*] French word for "hope."

5-6 *The lamentable change . . . laughter*] Change from the best fortune gives cause for lamentation; change from fortune when at the worst implies recovery, a return to something which makes for gaiety.

6-9 *Welcome . . . thy blasts*] This passage is omitted from the Quartos, and appears only in the Folios.

10-12 *O world! . . . age*] O world, if reverses of fortune did not make us condemn existence altogether, we should never resign ourselves to the hateful incidents of infirm age. In other words, the world with all its uncertainties of fortune is such a repellent object to us that it is a trifling matter whether we are young or old, strong or weak.

21-22 *Our means secure us . . . commodities*] The very possession of resources or capacities renders us careless in using them, and our very deficiencies or weaknesses cause us to employ such care as to make them of advantage to us. In other words, Gloucester means that when he had eyes he used them so carelessly as to stumble; now that he is

The food of thy abused father's wrath!
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,
I'd say I had eyes again!

OLD MAN. How now! Who's there?

EDG. [*Aside*] O gods! Who is 't can say "I am at
the worst"?

I am worse than e'er I was.

OLD MAN. 'T is poor mad Tom.

EDG. [*Aside*] And worse I may be yet: the worst is not
So long as we can say "This is the worst."

OLD MAN. Fellow, where goest?

GLOU. Is it a beggar-man? 30

OLD MAN. Madman and beggar too.

GLOU. He has some reason, else he could not beg.
I' the last night's storm I such a fellow saw,
Which made me think a man a worm: my son
Came then into my mind, and yet my mind
Was then scarce friends with him: I have heard more
since.

As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods;
They kill us for their sport.

EDG. [*Aside*] How should this be?

Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow,
Angering itself and others. Bless thee, master! 40

blind he must be so watchful of his steps that he is likely to avoid
stumbling. "Secure," which is commonly used adjectively as "care-
less," means as a verb "to render careless." Cf. *Tim. of Ath.*, II, ii,
177: "Secure thy heart."

23 *abused*] deceived.

38 *kill*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read, hardly intelligibly, *bitt* or *bit*.

39-40 *play fool to sorrow . . . others*] divert sorrow by making merri-
ment, whereby the distress is aggravated to the general vexation.

GLOU. Is that the naked fellow?

OLD MAN. Ay, my lord.

GLOU. Then, prithee, get thee gone: if for my sake
Thou wilt o'ertake us hence a mile or twain
I' the way toward Dover, do it for ancient love;
And bring some covering for this naked soul,
Who I'll entreat to lead me.

OLD MAN. Alack, sir, he is mad.

GLOU. 'T is the times' plague, when madmen lead the
blind.

Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure;
Above the rest, be gone.

OLD MAN. I'll bring him the best 'parel that I have, 50
Come on 't what will. *[Exit.]*

GLOU. Sirrah, naked fellow, —

EDG. Poor Tom 's a-cold. *[Aside]* I cannot daub it
further.

GLOU. Come hither, fellow.

EDG. *[Aside]* And yet I must. — Bless thy sweet eyes,
they bleed.

GLOU. Know'st thou the way to Dover?

EDG. Both stile and gate, horse-way and foot-path.
Poor Tom hath been scared out of his good wits. Bless
thee, good man's son, from the foul fiend! Five fiends
have been in poor Tom at once; of lust, as Obidicut; 60

53 *daub*] disguise.

59-64 *Five fiends . . . bless thee, master*] These lines are omitted from
the Folios, and appear only in the Quartos.

60-62 *Obidicut . . . Flibbertigibbet*] The names of all these five fiends
are adapted from Harsnet (see III, iv, 154, *supra*), though *Obidicut*
is spelt by Harsnet *Hoerberdicut*.

Hobbididence, prince of dumbness; Mahu, of stealing; Modo, of murder; Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and mowing; who since possesses chambermaids and waiting-women. So, bless thee, master!

GLOU. Here, take this purse, thou whom the heavens' plagues

Have humbled to all strokes: that I am wretched
 Makes thee the happier. Heavens, deal so still!
 Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man,
 That slaves your ordinance, that will not see
 Because he doth not feel, feel your power quickly; 70
 So distribution should undo excess
 And each man have enough. Dost thou know Dover?

EDG. Ay, master.

GLOU. There is a cliff whose high and bending head
 Looks fearfully in the confined deep:
 Bring me but to the very brim of it,
 And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear
 With something rich about me: from that place
 I shall no leading need.

EDG. Give me thy arm:

Poor Tom shall lead thee. [Exeunt. 80

62-63 *mopping and mowing*] grinning and grimacing (like an ape).

68-69 *the superfluous . . . ordinance*] the man surfeited with superfluous luxuries, and fed up by inordinate lusts, who makes the divine ordinances his slave by treating them as subservient to his pleasure.

70 *feel*] *sc.* pain, suffer.

SCENE II — BEFORE THE DUKE OF ALBANY'S PALACE

Enter GONERIL and EDMUND

GON. Welcome, my lord: I marvel our mild husband
Not met us on the way.

Enter OSWALD

Now, where's your master?

OSW. Madam, within; but never man so changed.
I told him of the army that was landed;
He smiled at it: I told him you were coming;
His answer was, "The worse:" of Gloucester's treachery
And of the loyal service of his son
When I inform'd him, then he call'd me sot
And told me I had turn'd the wrong side out:
What most he should dislike seems pleasant to him; 10
What like, offensive.

GON. [*To Edm.*] Then shall you go no further.
It is the cowish terror of his spirit,
That dares not undertake: he'll not feel wrongs,
Which tie him to an answer. Our wishes on the way

1 *Welcome, my lord*] Edmund has escorted Goneril home. See III, vii, 12-21, *supra*. She now welcomes him on entering her house.

8 *sot*] fool.

9 *turn'd the wrong side out*] completely misinterpreted the facts.

13-14 *he'll not feel . . . answer*] he'll take no notice of injuries which will require of him retaliation.

14-15 *Our wishes . . . effects*] The things we wished for when talking of them on the road may come to pass. The reference is to the murder of Goneril's husband, Albany.

May prove effects. Back, Edmund, to my brother;
 Hasten his musters and conduct his powers:
 I must change arms at home and give the distaff
 Into my husband's hands. This trusty servant
 Shall pass between us: ere long you are like to hear,
 If you dare venture in your own behalf, 20
 A mistress's command. Wear this; spare speech;

[*Giving a favour.*]

Decline your head: this kiss, if it durst speak,
 Would stretch thy spirits up into the air:
 Conceive, and fare thee well.

EDM. Yours in the ranks of death.

GON. My most dear Gloucester!
 [*Exit Edmund.*]

O, the difference of man and man!
 To thee a woman's services are due:
 My fool usurps my body.

Osw. Madam, here comes my lord.
 [*Exit.*]

Enter ALBANY

GON. I have been worth the whistle.

ALB. O Goneril!

You are not worth the dust which the rude wind 30
 Blows in your face. I fear your disposition:
 That nature which contemns its origin

17 *change arms*] exchange implements (*i. e.*, spears for spindles).

29 *I have been worth the whistle*] an adaptation of the common proverb,
 "A poor dog is not worth the whistling." Goneril was wont to receive
 an elaborate welcome on her return home.

31-50 *I fear your disposition . . . Like monsters of the deep*] These lines
 are omitted from the Folios, and appear only in the Quartos.

32-33 *That nature . . . in itself*] That disposition which contemns its

Cannot be border'd certain in itself;
 She that herself will sliver and disbranch
 From her material sap, perforce must wither
 And come to deadly use.

GON. No more; the text is foolish.

ALB. Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile:
 Filths savour but themselves. What have you done?
 Tigers, not daughters, what have you perform'd? 40
 A father, and a gracious aged man,
 Whose reverence even the head-lugg'd bear would lick,
 Most barbarous, most degenerate! have you madd'd.
 Could my good brother suffer you to do it?
 A man, a prince, by him so benefited!
 If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
 Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,
 It will come,
 Humanity must perforce prey on itself,
 Like monsters of the deep.

GON. Milk-liver'd man! 50
 That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;

parentage cannot be restrained within any fixed bounds (of law and order). *It origin* is the reading of (most copies of) the First Quarto and of the Second Quarto. The Third Quarto has the more modern form *its*.

35 *material sap*] sap giving essential nourishment.

36 *deadly use*] the use fitted for a thing that is dead, as in the case of dead wood, which is fit only for burning.

39 *Filths . . . themselves*] Filthy things only have a taste for filthy things.

42 *the head-lugg'd bear*] the bear dragged about by a cord round its head, and thereby infuriated.

43 *madd'd*] made mad, maddened.

Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning
 Thine honour from thy suffering; that not know'st
 Fools do those villains pity who are punish'd
 Ere they have done their mischief. Where's thy drum?
 France spreads his banners in our noiseless land,
 With plumed helm thy state begins to threat,
 Whiles thou, a moral fool, sit'st still and criest
 "Alack, why does he so?"

ALB. See thyself, devil!
 Proper deformity seems not in the fiend
 So horrid as in woman.

60

GON. O vain fool!

ALB. Thou changed and self-cover'd thing, for shame,
 Be-monster not thy feature. Were't my fitness
 To let these hands obey my blood,

52-55 *Who hast not . . . mischief*] Whose eyes are not able to distinguish the injury to thy honour in tamely suffering wrong; who dost not know that only fools show pity for those wretches who are punished before they have wrought the mischief they have designed.

53-59 *that not know'st . . . does he so?*] This passage is omitted from the Folios, and appears only in the Quartos.

57 *thy state begins to threat*] Jennens' emendation of the First Quarto reading *thy state begins thereat* and the later Quartos' reading *thy slaiier begins threats*.

58 *moral*] moralising.

60-61 *Proper deformity . . . woman*] Innate deformity or depravity seems not to be so horrible in the devil as in a woman.

62-68 *Thou changed . . . mew!*] These lines are omitted from the Folios.

62 *self-cover'd*] having your self or real personality covered or concealed (by a woman's shape). Cf. lines 66-67, *infra*. Albany means that Goneril, his wife, is really a fiend, whose form is exchanged with and concealed by "a woman's shape."

64 *blood*] disposition or impulse.

They are apt enough to dislocate and tear
 Thy flesh and bones: howe'er thou art a fiend,
 A woman's shape doth shield thee.

GON. Marry, your manhood! mew!

Enter a Messenger

ALB. What news?

MESS. O, my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall's
 dead,

70

Slain by his servant, going to put out
 The other eye of Gloucester.

ALB. Gloucester's eyes!

MESS. A servant that he bred, thrill'd with remorse,
 Opposed against the act, bending his sword
 To his great master; who thereat enraged
 Flew on him and amongst them fell'd him dead,
 But not without that harmful stroke which since
 Hath pluck'd him after.

ALB. This shows you are above,
 You justicers, that these our nether crimes

68 *manhood! mew!*] Some copies of the First Quarto read *manhood mew* —; others *manhood now* —, a reading substantially followed by the later Quartos. *Marry, your manhood now!* would mean that Goneril, who at line 50 had called her husband “milk-liver'd,” now taunts him with his boast of manhood. *Your manhood mew* would mean “restrain your manhood.” If the two notes of exclamation be admitted as in the text here, “mew” is a derisive interjection, for the use of which there is ample contemporary authority.

73 *remorse*] compassion.

74–75 *bending . . . To*] directing . . . at.

79 *justicers*] judges. Cf. III, vi, 23, *supra*.

So speedily can vengeance. But, O poor Gloucester! 80
Lost he his other eye?

MESS. Both, both, my lord.
This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer;
'T is from your sister.

GON. [*Aside*] One way I like this well;
But being widow, and my Gloucester with her,
May all the building in my fancy pluck
Upon my hateful life: another way,
The news is not so tart. — I'll read, and answer. [*Exit.*]

ALB. Where was his son when they did take his eyes?

MESS. Come with my lady hither.

ALB. He is not here.

MESS. No, my good lord; I met him back again. 90

ALB. Knows he the wickedness?

MESS. Ay, my good lord; 't was he inform'd against
him,

And quit the house on purpose, that their punishment
Might have the freer course.

ALB. Gloucester, I live
To thank thee for the love thou show'dst the king,
And to revenge thine eyes. Come hither, friend:
Tell me what more thou know'st. [*Exeunt.*]

83-86 *One way . . . hateful life*] Goneril's cruelty approves the death of Cornwall and the blinding of Gloucester. But seeing that her sister is now a widow and Edmund, whom she calls by his father's title, "my Gloucester," is in her sister's company, she fears that the design of killing her own husband and of thus opening the road to her own union with Edmund may be foiled, and that the castle of her imagination may fall and crush her own life, which in its present condition is loathsome to her.

90 *back again*] on his way back.

SCENE III — THE FRENCH CAMP NEAR DOVER

Enter KENT and a Gentleman

KENT. Why the King of France is so suddenly gone back know you the reason?

GENT. Something he left imperfect in the state which since his coming forth is thought of, which imports to the kingdom so much fear and danger that his personal return was most required and necessary.

KENT. Who hath he left behind him general?

GENT. The Marshal of France, Monsieur La Far.

KENT. Did your letters pierce the queen to any demonstration of grief? 10

GENT. Ay, sir; she took them, read them in my presence,

And now and then an ample tear trill'd down
Her delicate cheek: it seem'd she was a queen
Over her passion, who most rebel-like
Sought to be king o'er her.

KENT. O, then it moved her.

GENT. Not to a rage: patience and sorrow strove
Who should express her goodliest. You have seen
Sunshine and rain at once: her smiles and tears

SCENE iii] The whole of this scene is omitted from the Folios. It appears only in the Quartos.

(stage direction) *a Gentleman*] Cf. III, i, *supra*, where this gentleman was ordered to Dover to inform the French king and Cordelia of Lear's misfortunes.

12 *trill'd*] trickled.

Were like a better way: those happy smilets
 That play'd on her ripe lip seem'd not to know 20
 What guests were in her eyes; which parted thence
 As pearls from diamonds dropp'd. In brief,
 Sorrow would be a rarity most beloved,
 If all could so become it.

KENT. Made she no verbal question?

GENT. Faith, once or twice she heaved the name of
 "father"

Pantingly forth, as if it press'd her heart;
 Cried "Sisters! sisters! Shame of ladies! sisters!
 Kent! father! sisters! What, i' the storm? i' the night?
 Let pity not be believed!" There she shook
 The holy water from her heavenly eyes, 30
 And clamour moisten'd: then away she started
 To deal with grief alone.

KENT. It is the stars,
 The stars above us, govern our conditions;
 Else one self mate and mate could not beget
 Such different issues. You spoke not with her since?

19 *Were like a better way*] Had an effect of greater beauty than even the concurrence of sunshine and rain could produce. The reading is much disputed. Theobald accepted Warburton's absurd alteration *Were like a wetter May*. Another conjecture *Were like an April day* is, at any rate, unobjectionable.

20 *seem'd*] Pope's emendation of the Quarto reading *seeme*.

31 *clamour moisten'd*] Capell's emendation of the Quarto reading *clamour moistened her*. The words would mean that tears allayed her utterance, and stayed it from clamorous lamentation.

34 *self mate and mate*] the same husband and wife. Thus the Second and Third Quartos. The First Quarto reads *self mate and make*, "make" being a somewhat archaic word for "partner."

GENT. No.

KENT. Was this before the king return'd?

GENT. No, since.

KENT. Well, sir, the poor distressed Lear 's i' the town;

Who sometime in his better tune remembers

What we are come about, and by no means

40

Will yield to see his daughter.

GENT. Why, good sir?

KENT. A sovereign shame so elbows him: his own unkindness

That stripp'd her from his benediction, turn'd her

To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights

To his dog-hearted daughters: these things sting

His mind so venomously that burning shame

Detains him from Cordelia.

GENT. Alack, poor gentleman!

KENT. Of Albany's and Cornwall's powers you heard not?

GENT. 'T is so; they are afoot.

KENT. Well, sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear, 50

And leave you to attend him: some dear cause

Will in concealment wrap me up awhile;

When I am known aright, you shall not grieve

Lending me this acquaintance. I pray you, go

Along with me.

[*Exeunt.*]

42 *A sovereign shame . . . him*] A predominant sense of shame thus thrusts him aside (from a reconciliation). The sense is explained in lines 46, 47, *infra*, "burning *shame* detains him from Cordelia."

49 *'T is so*] It is the fact that I have heard of them.

51 *some dear cause*] some very good reason.

SCENE IV — THE SAME

A TENT

Enter, with drum and colours, CORDELIA, Doctor, and Soldiers

COR. Alack, 't is he: why, he was met even now
 As mad as the vex'd sea; singing aloud;
 Crown'd with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds,
 With bur-docks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers,
 Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow
 In our sustaining corn. A century send forth;
 Search every acre in the high-grown field,
 And bring him to our eye. [*Exit an Officer.*] What can
 man's wisdom
 In the restoring his bereaved sense?
 He that helps him take all my outward worth. 10

DOCT. There is means, madam:
 Our foster-nurse of nature is repose,

3-5 *rank fumiter . . . bur-docks . . . cuckoo-flowers, Darnel*] Cf. *Hen. V*, V, ii, 44-46: "her fallow leas The *darnel*, hemlock and *rank fumitory* Doth root upon." "Fumiter," *i. e.*, "fumitory," from the French "fumeterre," *i. e.*, earth-smoke, is a common sort of weed, of which there seem to be five species known in England. *Bur-docks* is Ham-mer's change for the Quarto reading *hordocks* and the Folio reading *Hardokes* or *Hardocks*; "hoardock" is the name of a coarse weed with whitish woolly leaves, which seems closely related to the "burdock," a coarse flower bearing prickly flowerheads called "burs," and having large dock-leaves. "Cuckoo flowers" is applied to many plants flowering in the spring, especially "ragged robin"; cf. *L. L. L.*, V, ii, 883, "cuckoo-buds." "Darnel" is raygrass, a weed often found in open corn-fields.

The which he lacks: that to provoke in him,
 Are many simples operative, whose power
 Will close the eye of anguish.

COR. All blest secrets,
 All you unpublish'd virtues of the earth,
 Spring with my tears! be aidant and remediate
 In the good man's distress! Seek, seek for him;
 Lest his ungovern'd rage dissolve the life
 That wants the means to lead it.

Enter a Messenger

MESS. News, madam; 20
 The British powers are marching hitherward.

COR. 'T is known before; our preparation stands
 In expectation of them. O dear father,
 It is thy business that I go about;
 Therefore great France
 My mourning and important tears hath pitied.
 No blown ambition doth our arms incite,
 But love, dear love, and our aged father's right:
 Soon may I hear and see him! [Exeunt.]

14 *simples*] medicinal herbs.

17 *aidant and remediate*] helpful and remedial. "Remediate" is Shakespeare's coinage, on the model of "immediate."

20 *the means to lead it*] the control of reason to guide it.

26 *important tears*] importunate tears. Cf. *All's Well*, III, vii, 21: "*important blood*."

27 *blown*] inflated.

SCENE V — GLOUCESTER'S CASTLE

Enter REGAN and OSWALD

REG. But are my brother's powers set forth?

OSW. Ay, madam.

REG. Himself in person there?

OSW. Madam, with much ado:
Your sister is the better soldier.

REG. Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home?

OSW. No, madam.

REG. What might import my sister's letter to him?

OSW. I know not, lady.

REG. Faith, he is posted hence on serious matter.
It was great ignorance, Gloucester's eyes being out,
To let him live: where he arrives he moves 10
All hearts against us: Edmund, I think, is gone,
In pity of his misery, to dispatch
His nighted life; moreover, to descry
The strength o' the enemy.

OSW. I must needs after him, madam, with my letter.

REG. Our troops set forth to-morrow: stay with us;
The ways are dangerous.

⁴ *your lord*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *your Lady*, which is pointless; for Regan knows that Edmund was her sister Goneril's companion from Gloucester's castle to Albany's palace, and that he had every opportunity of speaking with her on her journey home. On their arrival, Regan's enquiry can only be directed to Edmund's recent relations with Albany, Goneril's husband and Oswald's lord.
¹³ *nighted*] darkened, gloomy. Cf. *Hamlet*, I, ii, 68: "thy *nighted* colour" (*i. e.*, thy gloomy complexion).

OSW. I may not, madam:
My lady charged my duty in this business.

REG. Why should she write to Edmund? Might not
you
Transport her purposes by word? Belike, 20
Something — I know not what: I'll love thee much,
Let me unseal the letter.

OSW. Madam, I had rather —

REG. I know your lady does not love her husband;
I am sure of that: and at her late being here
She gave strange œillades and most speaking looks
To noble Edmund. I know you are of her bosom.

OSW. I, madam?

REG. I speak in understanding: you are; I know't:
Therefore I do advise you, take this note: 30
My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talk'd;
And more convenient is he for my hand
Than for your lady's: you may gather more.
If you do find him, pray you, give him this;
And when your mistress hears thus much from you,
I pray, desire her call her wisdom to her.

25 *œillades*] amorous glances; a French word. Cf. *M. Wives*, I, iii, 57.

26 *of her bosom*] in her confidence.

29 *take this note*] usually explained as "take note of this." But in view of the "give him this" of line 33, *infra*, and "take thou this note," V, iii, 28, *infra*, Regan has been credited with referring to a letter which she now hands to Oswald. At IV, vi, 250-253, *infra*, when Oswald dies, "letters" which are in his pockets are twice mentioned, though only one from Goneril to Edmund is actually read out.

35 *desire her call her wisdom to her*] an ironical way of advising Goneril to think better of her amour with Edmund.

So, fare you well.

If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,
Preferment falls on him that cuts him off.

Osw. Would I could meet him, madam! I should
show

What party I do follow.

REG. Fare thee well. [Exeunt. 40

SCENE VI — FIELDS NEAR DOVER

Enter GLOUCESTER, and EDGAR dressed like a peasant

GLOU. When shall we come to the top of that same
hill?

EDG. You do climb up it now: look, how we labour.

GLOU. Methinks the ground is even.

EDG. Horrible steep.

Hark, do you hear the sea?

GLOU. No, truly.

EDG. Why then your other senses grow imperfect
By your eyes' anguish.

GLOU. So may it be indeed:
Methinks thy voice is alter'd, and thou speak'st
In better phrase and matter than thou didst.

EDG. You're much deceived: in nothing am I changed
But in my garments.

38 *Preferment*] Advancement, promotion.

1 *that same hill*] The fine description which follows of the great cliff near Dover has caused it to be long christened "The Shakespeare Cliff."

GLOU. Methinks you're better spoken. 10

EDG. Come on, sir; here's the place: stand still.

How fearful

And dizzy 't is to cast one's eyes so low!

The crows and choughs that wing the midway air

Show scarce so gross as beetles: half way down

Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!

Methinks he seems no bigger than his head:

The fishermen that walk upon the beach

Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark

Diminish'd to her cock; her cock, a buoy

Almost too small for sight: the murmuring surge 20

That on the unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes

Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,

Lest my brain turn and the deficient sight

Topple down headlong.

GLOU. Set me where you stand.

EDG. Give me your hand: you are now within a
foot

Of the extreme verge: for all beneath the moon

Would I not leap upright.

13 *choughs*] jackdaws.

15 *samphire*] The early editions read *sampire*, indicating the pronunciation which still survives in America. It is a rock herb named after St. Pierre or St. Peter, which is much used for pickling. It is sometimes called "sea-fennel."

19 *cock*] a ship's small boat, often called cock-boat.

21 *unnumber'd*] innumerable.

27 *Would I not leap upright*] The spot is pretended to be so near the edge of the precipice that the utmost peril would be incurred by any leap or rapid movement in an upright posture.

GLOU. Let go my hand.
 Here, friend, 's another purse; in it a jewel
 Well worth a poor man's taking: fairies and gods
 Prosper it with thee! Go thou further off; 30
 Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

EDG. Now fare you well, good sir.

GLOU. With all my heart.

EDG. Why I do trifle thus with his despair
 Is done to cure it.

GLOU. [*Kneeling*] O you mighty gods!
 This world I do renounce, and in your sights
 Shake patiently my great affliction off:
 If I could bear it longer and not fall
 To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,
 My snuff and loathed part of nature should
 Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O bless him! 40
 Now, fellow, fare thee well. [*He falls forward.*]

EDG. Gone, sir: farewell.
 And yet I know not how conceit may rob
 The treasury of life, when life itself
 Yields to the theft: had he been where he thought,
 By this had thought been past. Alive or dead?
 Ho, you sir! friend! Hear you, sir! speak!
 Thus might he pass indeed: yet he revives.
 What are you, sir?

GLOU. Away, and let me die.

28 *another purse*] Cf. IV, i, 65, *supra*, where Gloucester already gives Edgar one of his purses.

39 *snuff*] refuse or dregs.

42 *conceit*] imagination, false impression.

47 *pass*] pass away, die.

EDG. Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers,
 air,
 So many fathom down precipitating, 50
 Thou 'dst shiver'd like an egg: but thou dost breathe;
 Hast heavy substance; bleed'st not; speak'st; art
 sound.
 Ten masts at each make not the altitude
 Which thou hast perpendicularly fell:
 Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.
 GLOU. But have I fall'n, or no?
 EDG. From the dread summit of this chalky bourn.
 Look up a-height; the shrill-gorged lark so far
 Cannot be seen or heard: do but look up.
 GLOU. Alack, I have no eyes. 60
 Is wretchedness deprived that benefit,
 To end itself by death? 'T was yet some comfort,
 When misery could beguile the tyrant's rage
 And frustrate his proud will.
 EDG. Give me your arm:
 Up: so. How is't? Feel you your legs? You stand.
 GLOU. Too well, too well.
 EDG. This is above all strangeness.
 Upon the crown o' the cliff, what thing was that
 Which parted from you?
 GLOU. A poor unfortunate beggar.
 EDG. As I stood here below, methought his eyes
 Were two full moons; he had a thousand noses, 70

53 *Ten masts at each*] Ten masts fastened end to end.

57 *this chalky bourn*] this boundary of chalk.

58 *shrill-gorged*] shrill-throated.

Horns whelk'd and waved like the enridged sea:
 It was some fiend; therefore, thou happy father,
 Think that the clearest gods, who make them honours
 Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee.

GLOU. I do remember now: henceforth I'll bear
 Affliction till it do cry out itself
 "Enough, enough," and die. That thing you speak of,
 I took it for a man; often 't would say
 "The fiend, the fiend:" he led me to that place.

EDG. Bear free and patient thoughts. But who comes
 here? 80

Enter LEAR, fantastically dressed with wild flowers

The safer sense will ne'er accommodate
 His master thus.

LEAR. No, they cannot touch me for coining; I am
 the king himself.

EDG. O thou side-piercing sight!

LEAR. Nature's above art in that respect. There's
 your press-money. That fellow handles his bow like a

71 *whelk'd and waved . . . sea*] twisted or convolved (like the shell of the whelk fish) and fluted like the furrowed sea.

73 *clearest*] most pure or righteous.

74 *impossibilities*] incapacities, things that men's powers make it impossible for them to do.

80 *free*] free from fear.

81-82 *The safer sense . . . thus*] The saner sense or the reason would never allow one in full possession of it to dress himself up thus. "His master" would be in modern grammar "its master."

85 *side-piercing*] piercing the heart.

86-87 *There's your press-money*] Lear imagines himself a recruiting officer handing bounty money to men forcibly impressed.

crow-keeper; draw me a clothier's yard. Look, look, a mouse! Peace, peace; this piece of toasted cheese will do 't. There's my gauntlet; I'll prove it on a giant.⁹⁰ Bring up the brown bills. O, well flown, bird! i' the clout, i' the clout: hewgh! Give the word.

EDG. Sweet marjoram.

LEAR. Pass.

GLOU. I know that voice.

LEAR. Ha! Goneril, with a white beard! They flattered me like a dog, and told me I had white hairs in my beard ere the black ones were there. To say "ay" and "no" to every thing that I said! "Ay" and "no"⁹⁹ too was no good divinity. When the rain came to wet me once and the wind to make me chatter; when the thunder would not peace at my bidding; there I found 'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are not men o' their words: they told me I was every thing; 't is a lie, I am not ague-proof.

88 *crow-keeper*] scarecrow; an office sometimes filled by a loutish boy; more often by a clumsy figure resembling a man.

draw me a clothier's yard] shoot an arrow the length of a clothier's yard measure. "Me" is the ethic dative.

90 *gauntlet*] the leather glove commonly thrown down to invite a challenge.

91 *the brown bills*] the halberdiers, soldiers bearing halberds, which were painted brown to preserve them from rust.

well flown, bird!] the falconer's cry to the hawk.

92 *i' the clout*] the cry of the archer who hit the "clout" *i. e.*, the bull's eye or pin fixed in the centre of the butt or target.

Give the word] The mad king imagines himself a sentinel demanding the watchword of Edgar.

99-100 "Ay" and "no" . . . *divinity*] Merely to echo my "yes" and "no" had nothing that was good or divine in it. It was mere sycophancy.

GLOU. The trick of that voice I do well remember:
Is 't not the king?

LEAR. Ay, every inch a king:
When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.
I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause?
Adultery? 110
Thou shalt not die: die for adultery! No:
The wren goes to 't, and the small gilded fly
Does lecher in my sight.
Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester's bastard son
Was kinder to his father than my daughters
Got 'tween the lawful sheets.
To 't, luxury, pell-mell! for I lack soldiers.
Behold yond simpering dame,
Whose face between her forks presages snow,
That minces virtue and does shake the head 120
To hear of pleasure's name;
The fitchew, nor the soiled horse, goes to 't
With a more riotous appetite.

106 *trick*] peculiar note.

109 *thy cause*] the charge brought against thee.

117 *luxury*] lust.

119 *Whose face . . . snow*] Cf. *Tim. of Ath.*, IV, iii, 383-384: "Whose blush doth thaw the consecrated snow That lies on Dian's lap." Lear means that the person of the "simpering dame" suggests coyness. "Forks" is equivalent to "legs"; cf. III, iv, 107, *supra*: "a *forked* animal."

120 *minces*] affects with pretence of timidity.

122 *fitchew*] polecat, often applied to a harlot.

the soiled horse] the horse turned out to new grass, which rendered him wanton.

Down from the waist they are Centaurs,
 Though women all above:
 But to the girdle do the gods inherit,
 Beneath is all the fiends';
 There's hell, there's darkness, there's the sulphurous pit,
 Burning, scalding, stench, consumption; fie, fie, fie!
 pah, pah! Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary,
 to sweeten my imagination: there's money for thee. 131

GLOU. O, let me kiss that hand!

LEAR. Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.

GLOU. O ruin'd piece of nature! This great world
 Shall so wear out to nought. Dost thou know me?

LEAR. I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost
 thou squiny at me? No, do thy worst, blind Cupid; I'll
 not love. Read thou this challenge; mark but the pen-
 ning on't.

GLOU. Were all the letters suns, I could not see one.

EDG. I would not take this from report: it is, 141
 And my heart breaks at it.

LEAR. Read.

GLOU. What, with the case of eyes?

LEAR. O, ho, are you there with me? No eyes in
 your head, nor no money in your purse? Your eyes are

124 *Centaurs*] used as the type of sensuality. The Centaurs, according to
 Ovid, *Metam.*, XII, 210, *seq.*, were given up to lust and violence.

126 *do the gods inherit*] do the gods possess or own.

130 *civet*] a musky perfume, obtained from the glands of the civet cat. Cf.
 III, iv, 103-104: "thou owest . . . the cat no perfume."

137 *squiny*] look askint.

144 *with the case of eyes*] with the sockets which once held eyes.

145 *are you there with me?*] do you understand me?

in a heavy case, your purse in a light: yet you see how this world goes.

GLOU. I see it feelingly. 149

LEAR. What, art mad? A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears: see how yond justice rails upon yond simple thief. Hark, in thine ear: change places, and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief? Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

GLOU. Ay, sir.

LEAR. And the creature run from the cur? There thou mightst behold the great image of authority: a dog's obeyed in office.

Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand! 160

Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;

Thou hotly lust'st to use her in that kind

For which thou whip'sther. The usurer hangs the cozener.

Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;

Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,

147 *a heavy case*] a sad plight.

153 *handy-dandy*] a children's game; sleight of hand in which a thing is rapidly changed from one hand to the other, to the confusion of the onlooker.

163 *The usurer hangs the cozener*] The magistrate, who practises usury, sentences to death the swindler.

164 *small vices*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *great vices*, which may give the passage the difficult meaning that vice is always greater when seen through tatters.

165 *furr'd gowns*] For this reference to the merchant-alderman's official dress, cf. *Meas. for Meas.*, III, ii, 7.

165-170 *Plate sin . . . accuser's lips*] This passage is omitted from the Quartos, and appears only in the Folios.

And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks ;
 Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.
 None does offend, none, I say, none ; I'll able 'em :
 Take that of me, my friend, who have the power
 To seal the accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes, 170
 And, like a scurvy politician, seem
 To see the things thou dost not.
 Now, now, now, now : pull off my boots : harder, harder :
 so.

EDG. O, matter and impertinency mix'd !
 Reason in madness !

LEAR. If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.
 I know thee well enough ; thy name is Gloucester :
 Thou must be patient ; we came crying hither :
 Thou know'st, the first time that we smell the air, 180
 We wawl and cry. I will preach to thee : mark.

GLOU. Alack, alack the day !

LEAR. When we are born, we cry that we are come
 To this great stage of fools. This 's a good block.
 It were a delicate stratagem, to shoe
 A troop of horse with felt : I'll put 't in proof ;

168 *I'll able 'em*] I'll answer or vouch for them.

171 *politician*] political intriguer ; always used in a depreciatory sense by Shakespeare.

175 *impertinency*] irrelevancy.

181 *wawl*] wail or howl.

184 *This 's a good block*] All the old editions read substantially *This a good block*. The sentence is difficult. "Block" is frequently used for the mould on which a hat is fashioned, and thus for the hat itself. Lear may be supposed crazily to snatch a hat from the head of a bystander, and, then noticing that it is made of felt, to be led to his next reflection.

And when I have stol'n upon these sons-in-law,
Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!

Enter a Gentleman, with Attendants

GENT. O, here he is: lay hand upon him. Sir,
Your most dear daughter — 190

LEAR. No rescue? What, a prisoner? I am even
The natural fool of fortune. Use me well;
You shall have ransom. Let me have a surgeon;
I am cut to the brains.

GENT. You shall have any thing.

LEAR. No seconds? all myself?
Why, this would make a man a man of salt,
To use his eyes for garden water-pots,
Ay, and laying autumn's dust.

GENT. Good sir, —

LEAR. I will die bravely, like a smug bridegroom.
What! 200

I will be jovial: come, come; I am a king,
My masters, know you that.

GENT. You are a royal one, and we obey you.

LEAR. Then there 's life in 't. Nay, an you get it,
you shall get it by running. Sa, sa, sa, sa.

[Exit running; Attendants follow.]

GENT. A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,

196 *salt*] salt tears.

200 *I will die . . . bridegroom*] Cf. *Ant. & Cleop.*, IV, xiv, 99-100: "I will be *A bridegroom in my death.*" "*Smug*" means spruce, without any depreciatory sense. Cf. *Merch. of Ven.*, III, i, 39: "so *smug* upon the mart."

205 *Sa, sa, sa, sa*] These syllables represent Lear's panting as he runs. They are omitted from the Quartos.

Past speaking of in a king! Thou hast one daughter,
Who redeems nature from the general curse
Which twain have brought her to.

EDG. Hail, gentle sir.

GENT. Sir, speed you: what's your will?

EDG. Do you hear aught, sir, of a battle toward? 211

GENT. Most sure and vulgar: every one hears that,
Which can distinguish sound.

EDG. But, by your favour,
How near's the other army?

GENT. Near and on speedy foot; the main descry
Stands on the hourly thought.

EDG. I thank you, sir: that's all.

GENT. Though that the queen on special cause is here,
Her army is moved on.

EDG. I thank you, sir. [Exit Gent.]

GLOU. You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me;
Let not my worser spirit tempt me again 220
To die before you please!

EDG. Well pray you, father.

GLOU. Now, good sir, what are you?

EDG. A most poor man, made tame to fortune's
blows;

212 *vulgar*] generally known.

215-216 *the main descry . . . hourly thought*] it is expected every hour that the main army will be descried. For another usage of "stand on," see V, i, 68-69, *infra*.

221 *father*] a colloquial term of address of a young to an old man. Cf. line 257, *infra*. Gloucester has not yet recognised his son in Edgar.

223 *tame to*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *lame by*, with which compare *Sonnet xxxvii*, 3: "So I made lame by fortune's dearest spite."

Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,
Am pregnant to good pity. Give me your hand,
I'll lead you to some biding.

GLOU. Hearty thanks;
The bounty and the benison of heaven
To boot, and boot!

Enter OSWALD

Osw. A proclaim'd prize! Most happy!
That eyeless head of thine was first framed flesh
To raise my fortunes. Thou old unhappy traitor, 230
Briefly thyself remember: the sword is out
That must destroy thee.

GLOU. Now let thy friendly hand
Put strength enough to 't. [*Edgar interposes.*]

Osw. Wherefore, bold peasant,
Darest thou support a publish'd traitor? Hence!
Lest that the infection of his fortune take
Like hold on thee. Let go his arm.

EDG. Chill not let go, zir, without vurther 'casion.

Osw. Let go, slave, or thou diest!

EDG. Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor volk
pass. An chud ha' been zwaggered out of my life,

224-225 *by the art . . . pregnant*] by the tuition of experienced and heart-felt sorrows am readily moved.

226 *biding*] lodging.

228 *To boot, and boot*] In addition, and addition; to the fullest possible extent.

231 *Briefly thyself remember*] Quickly recall thy sins and repent.

234 *publish'd*] proclaimed.

237 *Chill*] I will. This south country rustic dialect is ordinarily allotted to rustics on the contemporary stage.

't would not ha' been zo long as 't is by a vortnight. Nay, come not near th' old man; keep out, che vor ye, or I'se try whether your costard or my ballow be the harder: chill be plain with you.

Osw. Out, dunghill! [*They fight.* 245

EDG. Chill pick your teeth, zir: come; no matter vor your foins. [*Oswald falls.*

Osw. Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my purse: If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body; And give the letters which thou find'st about me 250 To Edmund earl of Gloucester; seek him out Upon the British party. O, untimely death! Death! [*Dies.*

EDG. I know thee well: a serviceable villain, As duteous to the vices of thy mistress As badness would desire.

GLOU. What, is he dead?

EDG. Sit you down, father; rest you.

242 *che vor ye*] I warn you.

243 *your costard or my ballow*] your head or my cudgel.

245 *Out, dunghill*] a common term of opprobrium. Cf. *K. John*, IV, iii, 87: "Out dunghill, darest thou brave a nobleman?"

247 *foins*] thrusts in fencing. Cf. *Much Ado*, V, i, 84: "*joining fence.*"

252 *Upon the British party*] Among the British. The Quartos read *British*, while the Folios read *English*. Cf. III, iv, 180, *supra*, where "a *British man*" is read in a passage quoted from an old ballad, which has "*Englishman.*" Owing to the accession of James I to the English throne, it was deemed complimentary to the Scottish king to give all his subjects the epithet *British*, though Shakespeare in first drafting the play failed to respect this punctilio.

255 *duteous*] obsequious, obedient.

257 *father*] See note on line 221, *supra*.

Let 's see these pockets: the letters that he speaks of
 May be my friends. He 's dead; I am only sorry
 He had no other deathsman. Let us see: 260
 Leave, gentle wax; and, manners, blame us not:
 To know our enemies' minds, we 'ld rip their hearts;
 Their papers, is more lawful.

[*Reads*] "Let our reciprocal vows be remembered. You have many opportunities to cut him off: if your will want not, time and place will be fruitfully offered. There is nothing done, if he return the conqueror: then am I the prisoner, and his bed my gaol; from the loathed warmth whereof deliver me, and supply the place for your labour.

"Your — wife, so I would say — affectionate servant,
 "GONERIL." 270

O undistinguish'd space of woman's will!
 A plot upon her virtuous husband's life;
 And the exchange my brother! Here, in the sands,
 Thee I'll rake up, the post unsanctified
 Of murderous lechers; and in the mature time
 With this ungracious paper strike the sight
 Of the death-practised duke: for him 't is well
 That of thy death and business I can tell.

260 *deathsman*] executioner.

261 *Leave, gentle wax*] Cf. *Tw. Night*, II, v, 85: "By your *leave, wax*."

269 *servant*] lover, as in the Italian "(cavaliere) servente." Cf. *Two Gent.*, II, i, 97.

271 *undistinguish'd . . . will*] boundless range of woman's desire.

"Will" is constantly used by Shakespeare in the significance of lust. Cf. Lee's *Life of Shakespeare*, Appendix VIII.

274 *rake up*] cover.

277 *death-practised*] whose death is plotted.

GLOU. The king is mad: how stiff is my vile sense,
 That I stand up, and have ingenious feeling 280
 Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract:
 So should my thoughts be sever'd from my griefs,
 And woes by wrong imaginations lose
 The knowledge of themselves. [Drum afar off.]

EDG. Give me your hand:
 Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum:
 Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend. [Exeunt.]

SCENE VII—A TENT IN THE FRENCH CAMP. LEAR
 ON A BED ASLEEP, SOFT MUSIC PLAYING;
 GENTLEMAN, AND OTHERS ATTENDING

Enter CORDELIA, KENT, *and* Doctor

COR. O thou good Kent, how shall I live and work,
 To match thy goodness? My life will be too short,
 And every measure fail me.

280 *ingenious feeling*] lively consciousness.

283 *by wrong imaginations*] by dint of crazy misapprehensions.

Sc. vii (stage direction) *A Tent . . . and Doctor*] These directions are mainly due to Capell. The original editions only indicate here the entrance of Cordelia, with whom the Quartos associate *Kent and Doctor*, and the Folios, *Kent and Gentleman*. The Quartos give no indication at all of Lear's entry, which the Folios do not note until (see line 20, *infra*, note). The Folios give to the "Gentleman" the speeches assigned to the "Doctor" by the Quartos. The Quartos specifically allot but one speech (lines 23-25, *infra*) to the "Gentleman," whose presence their stage direction fails to indicate. The first draft of the piece doubtless introduced both a Gentleman and a Doctor in consultation with Cordelia and Kent; a revision of the play made the two parts one.

KENT. To be acknowledged, madam, is o'erpaid.
All my reports go with the modest truth,
Nor more nor clipp'd, but so.

COR. Be better suited:
These weeds are memories of those worser hours:
I prithee, put them off.

KENT. Pardon me, dear madam;
Yet to be known shortens my made intent:
My boon I make it, that you know me not 10
Till time and I think meet.

COR. Then be 't so, my good lord. [*To the Doctor*] How
does the king?

DOCT. Madam, sleeps still.

COR. O you kind gods,
Cure this great breach in his abused nature!
The untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up
Of this child-changed father!

DOCT. So please your majesty
That we may wake the king: he hath slept long.

COR. Be govern'd by your knowledge, and proceed 20
I' the sway of your own will. Is he array'd?

6 *Nor more nor clipp'd, but so*] neither exaggerated nor curtailed, but just the truth.

suit'd] dressed.

9 *Yet to be known . . . intent*] Yet to be recognised comes short of, prevents, the due realisation of my deliberately formed aim. *Made* is sometimes substituted for the somewhat awkward word *made*. But the change is not essential.

17 *child-changed*] either "changed to a child" or "changed by the conduct of his children."

20 *Is he array'd?*] The Folios insert here the stage direction, *Enter Lear in a chaire carried by Seruants*.

GENT. Ay, madam; in the heaviness of his sleep
We put fresh garments on him.

DOCT. Be by, good madam, when we do awake him;
I doubt not of his temperance.

COR. Very well.

DOCT. Please you, draw near. Louder the music there!

COR. O my dear father! Restoration hang
Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters
Have in thy reverence made!

KENT. Kind and dear princess!

COR. Had you not been their father, these white flakes³⁰
Had challenged pity of them. Was this a face
To be opposed against the warring winds?
To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder?
In the most terrible and nimble stroke
Of quick, cross lightning? to watch — poor perdu! —

23–24 DOCT. *Be by, . . . temperance*] The Folios continue this speech to the “Gentleman.” The First Quarto, which like the other Quartos gives the preceding speech to the “Doctor,” assigns this to the “Gentleman,” who is not otherwise known to the Quarto text. The Second and Third Quartos allot the passage to Kent.

24 *temperance*] sanity, calmness.

24–25 *Very well . . . music there!*] These lines, which appear in the Quartos, are omitted from the Folios.

26–27 *Restoration . . . lips*] Let the curative or restorative powers hang medicine for thee on my lips.

30 *white flakes*] snow-white hair.

33–36 *To stand . . . helm?*] This passage is omitted from the Folios, and appears only in the Quartos.

35 *perdu*] Cotgrave explains “*enfants perdus*” or “*perdus*” as a “forlorne hope of a campe,” *i. e.*, soldiers intrusted with very perilous service.

With this thin helm? Mine enemy's dog,
 Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
 Against my fire; and wast thou fain, poor father,
 To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn,
 In short and musty straw? Alack, alack! 40
 'T is wonder that thy life and wits at once
 Had not concluded all. He wakes; speak to him.

DOCT. Madam, do you; 't is fittest.

COR. How does my royal lord? How fares your
 majesty?

LEAR. You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave:
 Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
 Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
 Do scald like molten lead.

COR. Sir, do you know me?

LEAR. You are a spirit, I know: when did you die?

COR. Still, still, far wide! 50

DOCT. He's scarce awake: let him alone awhile.

LEAR. Where have I been? Where am I? Fair
 daylight?
 I am mightily abused. I should e'en die with pity,

The term here applies to a sentinel in a situation of great danger who was often so designated. Cf. Beaumont & Fletcher's *The Little French Lawyer*, II, iii, 3-4: "I am set here like a *perdu* To watch a fellow."

36 *Mine enemy's dog*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *mine incurious dog*.

40 *short*] scanty, insufficient.

50 *wide*] astray.

53 *mightily abused*] terribly deceived or imposed upon. Cf. line 77, *infra*, and *Much Ado*, V, ii, 84: "the prince and Claudio *mightily abused*."

To see another thus. I know not what to say.
 I will not swear these are my hands: let's see;
 I feel this pin prick. Would I were assured
 Of my condition!

COR. O, look upon me, sir,
 And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.
 No, sir, you must not kneel.

LEAR. Pray, do not mock me:
 I am a very foolish fond old man, 60
 Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less;
 And, to deal plainly,
 I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
 Methinks I should know you and know this man;
 Yet I am doubtful; for I am mainly ignorant
 What place this is, and all the skill I have
 Remembers not these garments, nor I know not
 Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me;
 For, as I am a man, I think this lady
 To be my child Cordelia.

COR. And so I am, I am. 70

LEAR. Be your tears wet? yes, faith. I pray, weep
 not:

If you have poison for me, I will drink it.
 I know you do not love me; for your sisters
 Have, as I do remember, done me wrong:
 You have some cause, they have not.

COR. No cause, no cause.

61-62 *Fourscore . . . plainly*] The Quartos omit the words *not an hour more or less*, and read the rest as a single line. The words, which the Quartos omit, valuably illustrate Lear's continued mental weakness.

LEAR. Am I in France?

KENT. In your own kingdom, sir.

LEAR. Do not abuse me.

DOCT. Be comforted, good madam: the great rage,
You see, is kill'd in him: and yet it is danger
To make him even o'er the time he has lost. 80
Desire him to go in; trouble him no more
Till further settling.

COR. Will 't please your highness walk?

LEAR. You must bear with me. Pray you now,
forget and forgive: I am old and foolish.

[*Exeunt all but Kent and Gentleman.*]

GENT. Holds it true, sir, that the Duke of Cornwall
was so slain?

KENT. Most certain, sir.

GENT. Who is conductor of his people?

KENT. As 't is said, the bastard son of Gloucester. 90

GENT. They say Edgar, his banished son, is with the
Earl of Kent in Germany.

KENT. Report is changeable. 'Tis time to look
about; the powers of the kingdom approach apace.

77 *abuse*] deceive. Cf. line 53, *supra*, and note.

79-80 *and yet . . . lost*] These words are omitted from the Folios.

80 *even o'er*] account for, bridge over in his recollection. "Make even
with" was commonly used for "settle up with." Cf. *Macb.*, V,
viii, 62.

82 *Till further settling*] Till he be calmer. The word "settling" is in
harmony with "even o'er" of line 80.

83 *walk*] withdraw.

86-98 *Holds it true . . . battle's fought*] This passage is omitted from
the Folios.

GENT. The arbitrement is like to be bloody. Fare
you well, sir. [Exit.

KENT. My point and period will be throughly
wrought,
Or well or ill, as this day's battle 's fought. [Exit.

97-98 *My point and period . . . fought*] The aim and end of my life will
be fully attained for either good or ill in the course of this day's
battle.

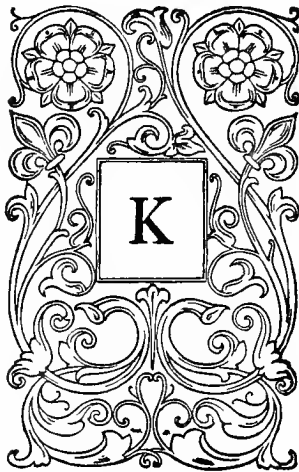


ACT FIFTH — SCENE I

THE BRITISH CAMP NEAR DOVER

Enter, with drum and colours, EDMUND, REGAN, Gentlemen, and Soldiers

EDMUND



NOW OF THE DUKE IF
his last purpose hold,
Or whether since he is advised
by aught
To change the course: he's full
of alteration
And self-reproving: bring his
constant pleasure.

[To a Gentleman, who goes out.]

REG. Our sister's man is certainly miscarried.

EDM. 'T is to be doubted, madam.

REG. Now, sweet lord,
You know the goodness I intend upon you:

⁴ *constant pleasure*] settled decision.

⁶ *doubted*] feared.

⁷ *I intend upon you*] I design for you.

Tell me, but truly, but then speak the truth,
Do you not love my sister?

EDM. In honour'd love.

REG. But have you never found my brother's way 10
To the forfended place?

EDM. That thought abuses you.

REG. I am doubtful that you have been conjunct
And bosom'd with her, as far as we call hers.

EDM. No, by mine honour, madam.

REG. I never shall endure her: dear my lord,
Be not familiar with her.

EDM. Fear me not. —
She and the duke her husband!

Enter, with drum and colours, ALBANY, GONERIL, and Soldiers.

GON. [*Aside*] I had rather lose the battle than that
sister
Should loosen him and me.

ALB. Our very loving sister, well be-met. 20
Sir, this I hear; the king is come to his daughter,
With others whom the rigour of our state
Forced to cry out. Where I could not be honest,
I never yet was valiant: for this business,
It toucheth us, as France invades our land,

11 [*forfended*] forbidden.

11-13 [*That thought . . . call hers*] This passage is omitted from the Folios.

15 [*I never . . . her*] I shall never submit to her capture of you.

23-28 [*Where I could not be . . . you speak nobly*] These lines are omitted from the Quartos.

25-26 [*It toucheth . . . the king*] It concerns us, inasmuch as the French force is invading our territory, not because our French foe is sup-

Not bolds the king, with others, whom, I fear,
Most just and heavy causes make oppose.

EDM. Sir, you speak nobly.

REG. Why is this reason'd?

GON. Combine together 'gainst the enemy;

For these domestic and particular broils

30

Are not the question here.

ALB. Let's then determine
With the ancient of war on our proceedings.

EDM. I shall attend you presently at your tent.

REG. Sister, you'll go with us?

GON. No.

REG. 'T is most convenient; pray you, go with us.

GON. [*Aside*] O, ho, I know the riddle. — I will go.

As they are going out, enter EDGAR disguised

EDG. If e'er your grace had speech with man so poor,
Hear me one word.

ALB. I'll overtake you. Speak.

[*Exeunt all but Albany and Edgar.*]

EDG. Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.

40

If you have victory, let the trumpet sound

porting King Lear. "Bolds" is used as a transitive verb meaning "encourages," "supports."

28 *reason'd*] discussed, talked about.

30 *particular broils*] private broils. Thus substantially the Folios. The Quartos read *door* (*dore* or *doore*) *particulars*, which is doubtfully explained as private affairs, at our business doors, or own homes. The Quarto reading looks like a misprint.

32 *ancient of war*] military veterans, those of long experience in warfare.

33 *I shall . . . tent*] This line is omitted from the Folios.

37 *I know the riddle*] I know your game.

For him that brought it: wretched though I seem,
 I can produce a champion that will prove
 What is avouched there. If you miscarry,
 Your business of the world hath so an end,
 And machination ceases. Fortune love you!

ALB. Stay till I have read the letter.

EDG. I was forbid it.

When time shall serve, let but the herald cry,
 And I'll appear again.

ALB. Why, fare thee well: I will o'erlook thy paper. ⁵⁰
[Exit Edgar.]

Re-enter EDMUND

EDM. The enemy's in view: draw up your powers.
 Here is the guess of their true strength and forces
 By diligent discovery; but your haste
 Is now urged on you.

ALB. We will greet the time. [Exit.]

EDM. To both these sisters have I sworn my love;
 Each jealous of the other, as the stung
 Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?
 Both? one? or neither? Neither can be enjoy'd,
 If both remain alive: to take the widow
 Exasperates, makes mad her sister Goneril; 60
 And hardly shall I carry out my side,

⁴⁶ *machination ceases*] the plot or intrigue against you concludes (with your death).

⁵⁴ *We will greet the time*] We will welcome the occasion, we shall be ready.

⁶¹ *carry out my side*] win my game. "Side" is often found as a technical term for a set of partners in a game played by two or more players, and hence was sometimes applied to the game itself or to a bout of play.

Her husband being alive. Now then we'll use
 His countenance for the battle; which being done,
 Let her who would be rid of him devise
 His speedy taking off. As for the mercy
 Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia,
 The battle done, and they within our power,
 Shall never see his pardon; for my state
 Stands on me to defend, not to debate. [Exit.]

SCENE II — A FIELD BETWEEN THE TWO CAMPS

*Alarum within. Enter, with drum and colours, LEAR, CORDELIA,
 and Soldiers, over the stage; and exeunt*

Enter EDGAR and GLOUCESTER

EDG. Here, father, take the shadow of this tree
 For your good host; pray that the right may thrive:
 If ever I return to you again,
 I'll bring you comfort.

GLOU. Grace go with you, sir!
[Exit Edgar.]

Alarum and retreat within. Re-enter EDGAR

EDG. Away, old man; give me thy hand; away!

68-69 *my state . . . debate*] my situation imposes on me the need of active defence, not of talk. For a cognate, although not identical use of "Stands on," cf. IV, vi, 216, *supra*. See also "Stand in," III, vi, 95-100, *supra*.

5 (stage direction) *Alarum . . . EDGAR*] Thus substantially the Folios. *Within. Re-enter EDGAR* are words omitted by the Quartos. This slight and inadequate indication of the battle, in which the Duke of Albany overcomes the French invaders, has been treated by many critics as a serious blemish in the perspicuous development of the

King Lear hath lost, he and his daughter ta'en :
Give me thy hand; come on.

GLOU. No further, sir; a man may rot even here.

EDG. What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming hither: 10
Ripeness is all: come on.

GLOU. And that's true too. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III—THE BRITISH CAMP NEAR DOVER

*Enter, in conquest, with drum and colours, EDMUND; LEAR and
CORDELIA, as prisoners; Captain, Soldiers, etc.*

EDM. Some officers take them away: good guard,
Until their greater pleasures first be known
That are to censure them.

COR. We are not the first
Who with best meaning have incurr'd the worst.
For thee, oppressed king, am I cast down;
Myself could else out-frown false fortune's frown.
Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?

LEAR. No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison:
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down 10
And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,

plot. The sympathies of the audience which are already strained to the uttermost on behalf of the suffering Lear and Cordelia, could, however ill endure any emphasis being laid on the defeat of the French champion of Cordelia and her father.

11 *Ripeness is all*] Cf. *Hamlet*, V, ii, 214: "if it be not now yet it will come; the *readiness is all*."

2-3 *their greater pleasures . . . That are to censure them*] the pleasures or commands of those greater persons who are to judge them.

And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
 At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
 Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,
 Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out;
 And take upon's the mystery of things,
 As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out,
 In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones
 That ebb and flow by the moon.

EDM. Take them away.

LEAR. Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia, 20
 The gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught thee?
 He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven,
 And fire us hence like foxes. Wipe thine eyes;
 The good-years shall devour them, flesh and fell,

13 *gilded butterflies*] fashionable courtiers.

16 *take upon's*] undertake inquiry into.

17 *God's spies*] angels commissioned by God to report on the lives of men.

18 *packs and sects*] parties and factions (of politicians).

23 *fire us hence like foxes*] drive us away as foxes are expelled from their holes by burning them out. Cf. *Sonnet* cxliv, 14: "Till my bad angel fire my good one out," and Guilpin's *Skialetheia*, 1598 (ed. Grosart, p. 17): "But Ile be loth, wench, to be *fired out*."

24 *The good-years*] There is no justification for Hanmer's generally accepted suggestion that this expression was a corruption of a French word "goujères" which meant venereal diseases. No such French word exists. The colloquial phrase "what the goodyear!" is common in Elizabethan English as an imprecation equivalent to "What the devil?" and suggests that "good year" was popularly used, by an ironical inversion of speech, of any maleficent influence. See note on *M. Wives*, I, iv, 110. "The good years" doubtless means here "the bad powers."

flesh and fell] literally "flesh and skin"; colloquially used for "flesh and bones."

Ere they shall make us weep: we'll see 'em starve first.

Come. *[Exeunt Lear and Cordelia, guarded.]*

EDM. Come hither, captain; hark.

Take thou this note: go follow them to prison:

One step I have advanced thee; if thou dost
As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way 30

To noble fortunes: know thou this, that men

Are as the time is: to be tender-minded

Does not become a sword: thy great employment

Will not bear question; either say thou'lt do't,

Or thrive by other means.

CAPT. I'll do't, my lord.

EDM. About it; and write happy when thou hast
done.

Mark; I say, instantly, and carry it so

As I have set it down.

CAPT. I cannot draw a cart, nor eat dried oats;

If it be man's work, I'll do't. *[Exit. 40]*

*Flourish. Enter ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, another Captain, and
Soldiers*

ALB. Sir, you have shown to-day your valiant strain,

And fortune led you well: you have the captives

That were the opposites of this day's strife:

28 *this note*] the warrant for the execution of Lear and Cordelia.

34 *Will not bear question*] Will not admit of discussion.

36 *write happy*] deem yourself fortunate.

39-40 *I cannot draw . . . do't*] These lines are omitted from the Folios.

41 *strain*] lineage.

43 *the opposites*] the persons opposed to us, our enemies.

We do require them of you, so to use them
As we shall find their merits and our safety
May equally determine.

EDM. Sir, I thought it fit
To send the old and miserable king
To some retention and appointed guard;
Whose age has charms in it, whose title more,
To pluck the common bosom on his side, 50
And turn our impress'd lances in our eyes
Which do command them. With him I sent the queen:
My reason all the same; and they are ready
To-morrow or at further space to appear
Where you shall hold your session. At this time
We sweat and bleed: the friend hath lost his friend;
And the best quarrels, in the heat, are cursed
By those that feel their sharpness.
The question of Cordelia and her father
Requires a fitter place.

ALB. Sir, by your patience, 60
I hold you but a subject of this war,
Not as a brother.

REG. That's as we list to grace him.

48 *retention*] confinement.

50 *the common bosom*] the heart of the common people.

51 *our impress'd lances*] weapons of the men we have impressed into our service.

55-60 *At this time . . . fitter place*] This passage is omitted from the Folios.

57-58 *And the best quarrels . . . sharpness*] And those engaged in wars even when waged in the justest of causes curse the quarrel in the excitement of the moment, when they suffer the bitter consequences, (either from loss of friends or by reason of their own wounds).

Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded,
 Ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers,
 Bore the commission of my place and person;
 The which immediacy may well stand up
 And call itself your brother.

GON. Not so hot:
 In his own grace he doth exalt himself
 More than in your addition.

REG. In my rights,
 By me invested, he compeers the best.

GON. That were the most, if he should husband you. 70

REG. Jesters do oft prove prophets.

GON. Holla, holla!
 That eye that told you so look'd but a-squint.

REG. Lady, I am not well; else I should answer
 From a full-flowing stomach. General,
 Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony;
 Dispose of them, of me; the walls are thine:
 Witness the world, that I create thee here
 My lord and master.

66 *The which immediacy*] Such intimate association with my "place and person." Cf. *Hamlet*, I, ii, 109: "the most *immediate* to our throne."

69 *in your addition*] by virtue of the title with which you invest him.

73 *That eye . . . a-squint*] Cf. Ray's *English Proverbs*: "Love being jealous makes a good eye look *a-squint*."

75 *stomach*] anger.

77 *Dispose . . . thine*] This line is omitted from the Quartos, and appears only in the Folios. "The walls are thine" means that Regan surrenders her person as though it were a vanquished person. Cf. *Cymb.*, II, i, 60-61: "The heavens hold firm *The walls of thy dear honour*."

GON. Mean you to enjoy him?

ALB. The let-alone lies not in your good will. 80

EDM. Nor in thine, lord.

ALB. Half-blooded fellow, yes.

REG. [*To Edmund*] Let the drum strike, and prove
my title thine.

ALB. Stay yet; hear reason. Edmund, I arrest thee
On capital treason; and in thine attaint
This gilded serpent [*pointing to Gon.*]. For your claim,
fair sister,

I bar it in the interest of my wife;
'Tis she is sub-contracted to this lord,
And I, her husband, contradict your bans.
If you will marry, make your loves to me;
My lady is bespoke.

GON. An interlude! 90

ALB. Thou art arm'd, Gloucester: let the trumpet
sound:

If none appear to prove upon thy person
Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,
There is my pledge [*throwing down a glove*]: I'll prove it
on thy heart,
Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less
Than I have here proclaim'd thee.

REG. Sick, O, sick!

80 *let-alone*] prohibition.

84 *in thine attaint*] in connexion with thy impeachment. Thus the
Quartos. The Folios read less satisfactorily *in thy arrest*.

90 *An interlude!*] A farce is on foot! This sarcastic interruption is omitted
from the Quartos.

94 *prove it*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *make it*.

GON. [*Aside*] If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine.

EDM. [*Throwing down a glove*] There's my exchange:
what in the world he is

That names me traitor, villain-like he lies:

Call by thy trumpet: he that dares approach, 100

On him, on you, — who not? — I will maintain
My truth and honour firmly.

ALB. A herald, ho!

EDM. A herald, ho, a herald!

ALB. Trust to thy single virtue; for thy soldiers,
All levied in my name, have in my name
Took their discharge.

REG. My sickness grows upon me.

ALB. She is not well; convey her to my tent.

[*Exit Regan, led.*]

Enter a Herald

Come hither, herald, — Let the trumpet sound, —
And read out this.

CAPT. Sound, trumpet! [*A trumpet sounds.* 110

HER. [*Reads*] "If any man of quality or degree within the
lists of the army will maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl of
Gloucester, that he is a manifold traitor, let him appear by the third
sound of the trumpet: he is bold in his defence."

EDM. Sound!

[*First trumpet.*]

97 *I'll ne'er trust medicine*] Goneril has poisoned her. Cf. line 228, *infra*.

104 *thy single virtue*] thy personal valour.

115 *Sound!*] Thus the Second and Third Quartos. The First Quarto reads
Sound? The Folios omit Edmund's exclamation.

KING LEAR

ACT V

HER. Again!

[*Second trumpet.*

HER. Again!

[*Third trumpet.*

[*Trumpet answers within.*

Enter EDGAR, at the third sound, armed, with a trumpet before him

ALB. Ask him his purposes, why he appears
Upon this call o' the trumpet.

HER. What are you?
Your name, your quality? and why you answer 120
This present summons?

EDG. Know, my name is lost;
By treason's tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit:
Yet am I noble as the adversary
I come to cope.

ALB. Which is that adversary?

EDG. What's he that speaks for Edmund, Earl of
Gloucester?

EDM. Himself: what say'st thou to him?

EDG. Draw thy sword,
That if my speech offend a noble heart,
Thy arm may do thee justice: here is mine.
Behold, it is the privilege of mine honours,
My oath, and my profession: I protest, 130
Maugre thy strength, youth, place and eminence,
Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune,

122 *canker-bit*] bitten by the caterpillar, by vermin.

124 *cope*] encounter.

129 *mine honours*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *my tongue*. "Mine honours" probably means "my honourable birth and standing."

Thy valour and thy heart, thou art a traitor,
 False to thy gods, thy brother and thy father,
 Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince,
 And from the extremest upward of thy head
 To the descent and dust below thy foot,
 A most toad-spotted traitor. Say thou "No,"
 This sword, this arm and my best spirits are bent
 To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,
 Thou liest.

140

EDM. In wisdom I should ask thy name,
 But since thy outside looks so fair and warlike
 And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes,
 What safe and nicely I might well delay
 By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn:
 Back do I toss these treasons to thy head;
 With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart;
 Which for they yet glance by and scarcely bruise.

133 *thy heart*] thy courage.

138 *toad-spotted*] spotted with marks of infamy as numerous as the spots on a toad.

143 *some say*] some assay, taste or smack.

144 *What safe . . . delay*] This line is omitted from the Quartos.

144-145 *What safe . . . knighthood*] That refusal (of your challenge) which I might well and quite accurately make in accordance with the laws of chivalry. "Safe" is often used adverbially; "nicely" is often used for "punctiliously"; "delay" often stands for "refuse." Cf. lines 152-153, *infra*.

146 *Back do I . . . head*] Thus the Folios; the Second and Third Quartos omit the line. The First Quarto reads *Heere do I tosse those treasons to thy head*.

147 *hell-hated*] hated as hell.

This sword of mine shall give them instant way,
Where they shall rest for ever. Trumpets, speak! 150
[Alarums. They fight. Edmund falls.]

ALB. Save him, save him!

GON. This is practice, Gloucester:
By the law of arms thou wast not bound to answer
An unknown opposite; thou art not vanquish'd,
But cozen'd and beguiled.

ALB. Shut your mouth, dame,
Or with this paper shall I stop it. Hold, sir;
Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil.
No tearing, lady; I perceive you know it.

GON. Say, if I do, the laws are mine, not thine:
Who can arraign me for 't?

ALB. Most monstrous!
Know'st thou this paper? 160

GON. Ask me not what I know. *[Exit.]*

150 *Where they shall rest for ever*] Edmund threatens to drive the treasonable accusations into Edgar's heart with the blow of death.

151 *Save him, save him!*] The involuntary exclamation either illustrates Albany's humanity or expresses Albany's wish to preserve Edmund's life until at least he has confessed the guilt of which the intercepted letter convicts him.
practice] deceitful intrigue.

155 *Hold, sir*] Look, sir. "Hold" is used in much the same sense as "tenez," to arrest attention. The words are omitted from the Quartos.

159 *Most monstrous!*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios insert after these words the exclamation *O*, an impressive groan from Albany at Goncril's insolent confession of her iniquity.

160 GON. *Ask me not what I know.* *[Exit.]* Thus the Quartos. The Folios assign this line to Edmund, marking Goncril's exit after her previous speech (line 159). Seeing that Albany has already elicited from

ALB. Go after her: she's desperate; govern her.

EDM. What you have charged me with, that have
I done;

And more, much more; the time will bring it out:
'T is past, and so am I. But what art thou
That hast this fortune on me? If thou'rt noble,
I do forgive thee.

EDG. Let's exchange charity.
I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund;
If more, the more thou hast wrong'd me.
My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.
The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices 170
Make instruments to plague us:
The dark and vicious place where thee he got
Cost him his eyes.

EDM. Thou hast spoken right, 't is true;
The wheel is come full circle; I am here.

ALB. Methought thy very gait did prophesy
A royal nobleness: I must embrace thee:
Let sorrow split my heart, if ever I
Did hate thee or thy father!

EDG. Worthy prince, I know't.

ALB. Where have you hid yourself?
How have you known the miseries of your father? 180

EDG. By nursing them, my lord. List a brief tale;
And when 't is told, O, that my heart would burst!

Generil the admission that she knew this paper, it might be thought unnecessary for him to renew his inquiry. But his next speech, "Go after her," etc., suggests that his wife is still addressing him here.

174 *The wheel is come full circle*] Cf. *Tw. Night*, V, i, 363: "The whirligig of time brings in his revenges."

The bloody proclamation to escape
 That follow'd me so near, — O, our lives' sweetness!
 That we the pain of death would hourly die
 Rather than die at once! — taught me to shift
 Into a madman's rags, to assume a semblance
 That very dogs disdain'd: and in this habit
 Met I my father with his bleeding rings,
 Their precious stones new lost; became his guide, 190
 Led him, begg'd for him, saved him from despair;
 Never — O fault! — reveal'd myself unto him,
 Until some half-hour past, when I was arm'd;
 Not sure, though hoping, of this good success,
 I ask'd his blessing, and from first to last
 Told him my pilgrimage: but his flaw'd heart, —
 Alack, too weak the conflict to support! —
 'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,
 Burst smilingly.

EDM. This speech of yours hath moved me,
 And shall perchance do good: but speak you on; 200
 You look as you had something more to say.

ALB. If there be more, more woful, hold it in;
 For I am almost ready to dissolve,
 Hearing of this.

EDG. This would have seem'd a period

185–186 *we the pain . . . die at once*] we would suffer every hour the pain of death rather than die once for all. Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *with the pain* for *we the pain*.

189 *rings*] sockets of the eyes.

203 *dissolve*] shed tears, melt in tears.

204–221 *This would . . . for a slave*] These lines are omitted from the Folios. They appear only in the Quartos.

To such as love not sorrow; but another,
 To amplify too much, would make much more,
 And top extremity.
 Whilst I was big in clamour, came there in a man,
 Who, having seen me in my worst estate,
 Shunn'd my abhorr'd society; but then, finding 210
 Who 't was that so endured, with his strong arms
 He fasten'd on my neck, and bellow'd out
 As he'ld burst heaven; threw him on my father;
 Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him
 That ever ear received: which in recounting
 His grief grew puissant, and the strings of life
 Began to crack: twice then the trumpets sounded,
 And there I left him tranced.

ALB. But who was this?

EDG. Kent, sir, the banish'd Kent; who in disguise
 Follow'd his enemy king, and did him service 220
 Improper for a slave.

Enter a Gentleman, with a bloody knife

GENT. Help, help, O, help!

EDG. What kind of help?

ALB. Speak, man.

EDG. What means this bloody knife?

GENT. 'T is hot, it smokes;
 It came even from the heart of — O, she's dead!

ALB. Who dead? speak, man.

205-207 *but another . . . extremity*] Any further period or conclusion to my story, by adding sorrow to what is already too much, would substantially increase the pathos and exceed the utmost limits of grief. "To amplify too much" is the gerundial infinitive.

GENT. Your lady, sir, your lady: and her sister
By her is poisoned; she hath confess'd it.

EDM. I was contracted to them both: all three
Now marry in an instant.

EDG. Here comes Kent.

ALB. Produce the bodies, be they alive or dead. 230

[Exit Gentleman.]

This judgement of the heavens, that makes us tremble,
Touches us not with pity.

Enter KENT

O, is this he?
The time will not allow the compliment
Which very manners urges.

KENT. I am come
To bid my king and master aye good night:
Is he not here?

ALB. Great thing of us forgot!
Speak, Edmund, where's the king? and where's
Cordelia?

See'st thou this object, Kent?

[The bodies of Goneril and Regan are brought in.]

KENT. Alack, why thus?

EDM. Yet Edmund was beloved:
The one the other poison'd for my sake, 240
And after slew herself.

226-227 *her sister . . . poisoned*] Cf. line 97, *supra*.

231 *judgement*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *Iustice*.

233-234 *the compliment . . . urges*] the interchange of courtesies which mere good breeding requires. "Manners" is also used thus in the singular in *Rom. and Jul.*, V, iii, 213.

ALB. Even so. Cover their faces.

EDM. I pant for life: some good I mean to do,
Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send,
Be brief in it, to the castle; for my writ
Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia:
Nay, send in time.

ALB. Run, run, O, run!

EDG. To who, my lord? Who hath the office? send
Thy token of reprieve.

EDM. Well thought on: take my sword, 250
Give it the captain.

ALB. Haste thee, for thy life. [*Exit Edgar.*]

EDM. He hath commission from thy wife and me
To hang Cordelia in the prison, and
To lay the blame upon her own despair,
That she fordid herself.

ALB. The gods defend her! Bear him hence awhile.
[*Edmund is borne off.*]

*Re-enter LEAR, with CORDELIA dead in his arms; EDGAR, Captain,
and others following*

LEAR. Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of
stones:

Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever:
I know when one is dead and when one lives; 260
She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass;
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
Why, then she lives.

255 [*fordid herself*] destroyed herself. Cf. line 291, *infra*.

262 *the stone*] the mirror of crystal.

KENT. Is this the promised end?
 EDG. Or image of that horror?
 ALB. Fall and cease.
 LEAR. This feather stirs; she lives. If it be so,
 It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows
 That ever I have felt.
 KENT. [*Kneeling*] O my good master!
 LEAR. Prithee, away.
 EDG. 'T is noble Kent, your friend.
 LEAR. A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!
 I might have saved her; now she's gone for ever! 270
 Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little. Ha!
 What is't thou say'st? Her voice was ever soft,
 Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.
 I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee.
 CAPT. 'T is true, my lords, he did.
 LEAR. Did I not, fellow?
 I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion -

263-264 *Is this . . . image of that horror*] Kent asks if this is the end allotted to all things, according to Scriptural prophecy. Edgar asks whether it is not rather a premonitory phantasm of the finer cataclysm. Cf. *Macb.*, II, iii, 76, where the murder of Duncan is described: "The great doom's *image*."

264 *Fall and cease*] Probably "Let all things fall and come to an end." Such an exclamation is naturally suggested by the two preceding interrogations. It is just possible (as has been suggested) that "fall" and "cease" are used here as substantives and that the phrase means "(It is) ruin and end (of things)." The speaker, Albany, designates the situation "this great decay" at line 297, *infra*.

265 *This feather stirs*] Cf. 2 *Hen. IV*, IV, v, 31-32: "By his gates of breath There lies a downy *feather* which *stirs* not."

276 *falchion*] scimitar.

I would have made them skip: I am old now,
 And these same crosses spoil me. Who are you?
 Mine eyes are not o' the best: I'll tell you straight.

KENT. If fortune brag of two she loved and hated, 280
 One of them we behold.

LEAR. This is a dull sight. Are you not Kent?

KENT. The same,
 Your servant Kent. Where is your servant Caius?

LEAR. He's a good fellow, I can tell you that;
 He'll strike, and quickly too: he's dead and rotten.

KENT. No, my good lord; I am the very man —

LEAR. I'll see that straight.

KENT. That from your first of difference and decay
 Have follow'd your sad steps.

LEAR. You are welcome hither.

KENT. Nor no man else: all's cheerless, dark and
 deadly. 290

278 *crosses*] misadventures.

281 *One of them we behold*] Thus all the early editions. But there is some justification for the conjectural change of *you* or *ye behold* for *we behold*. Kent is explaining to Lear his identity. After suggesting that there are two men of whom fortune may well boast that she has visited them with the full force of both her love and hate, he calls attention to himself as being one of the two. In the next line Lear glimmeringly recognises Kent from this description.

282 *This is a dull sight*] This is a melancholy spectacle which your words suggest. Thus the Folios. The Quartos omit the words. The suggested change *This is a dull light* in reference to the darkening of Lear's dying eyes is ingenious, but supererogatory.

288 *from your first of difference*] from the first indication of your change of fortune.

290 *Nor no man else*] There is no just cause of welcome for me or anyone else.

Your eldest daughters have fordone themselves,
And desperately are dead.

LEAR. Ay, so I think.

ALB. He knows not what he says, and vain is it
That we present us to him.

EDG. Very bootless.

Enter a Captain

CAPT. Edmund is dead, my lord.

ALB. That's but a trifle here.
You lords and noble friends, know our intent.
What comfort to this great decay may come
Shall be applied: for us, we will resign,
During the life of this old majesty,
To him our absolute power: [*To Edgar and Kent*] you, to
your rights; 300
With boot, and such addition as your honours
Have more than merited. All friends shall taste
The wages of their virtue, and all foes
The cup of their deservings. O, see, see!
LEAR. And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!

291 *fordone themselves*] destroyed themselves. Cf. line 255, *supra*.

292 *desperately*] in the despair of sin which denies them salvation.

297 *this great decay*] this colossal series of disasters.

304 *O, see, see!*] Lear moves to embrace the dead body of Cordelia.

305 *my poor fool*] a common term of endearment, here applied by Lear to Cordelia. The context makes it quite clear that Lear's thoughts are all concentrated on his dead daughter, whom he lately rescued from hanging (line 274, *supra*), and that he has no word to spare, as has been suggested, for the professional fool who was formerly his companion but disappeared leaving no trace, at III, vi, 101.

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
 And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
 Never, never, never, never, never!
 Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir.
 Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips, 310
 Look there, look there! [Dies.]

EDG. He faints. My lord, my lord!

KENT. Break, heart; I prithee, break!

EDG. Look up, my lord.

KENT. Vex not his ghost: O, let him pass! he hates
 him

That would upon the rack of this tough world
 Stretch him out longer.

EDG. He is gone indeed.

KENT. The wonder is he hath endured so long:
 He but usurp'd his life.

ALB. Bear them from hence. Our present business
 Is general woe. *[To Kent and Edgar]* Friends of my soul,
 you twain

Rule in this realm and the gored state sustain. 320

KENT. I have a journey, sir, shortly to go;
 My master calls me, I must not say no.

309 *Pray you, undo this button*] A singularly vivid touch, suggesting the sense of suffocation, which ends a few moments later in Lear's death.

310-311 *Do you see this? . . . look there!*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *O, o, o, o, o.*

321 *I have a journey . . . go*] an often repeated figurative description of death. Cf. Marlowe's *Edward II*, V, vi, 65-66, where Mortimer says as he is led to execution that he "as a traveller Goes to discover countries yet unknown." The most familiar instance is Hamlet's mention of death (III, i, 79-80) as "the undiscovered country from whose bourn No traveller returns."

KING LEAR

ACT V

ALB. The weight of this sad time we must obey,
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
The oldest hath borne most: we that are young
Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

[*Exeunt, with a dead march.*]

323-326 ALB. *The weight . . . so long*] The Quartos justly give this speech to Albany. The Folios awkwardly transfer it to Edgar.

